

new worlds

No. 192 Five Shillings or One Dollar



Langdon Jones:

THE GARDEN OF DELIGHTS

Norman Spinrad:

THE LAST HURRAH OF
THE GOLDEN HORDE

also

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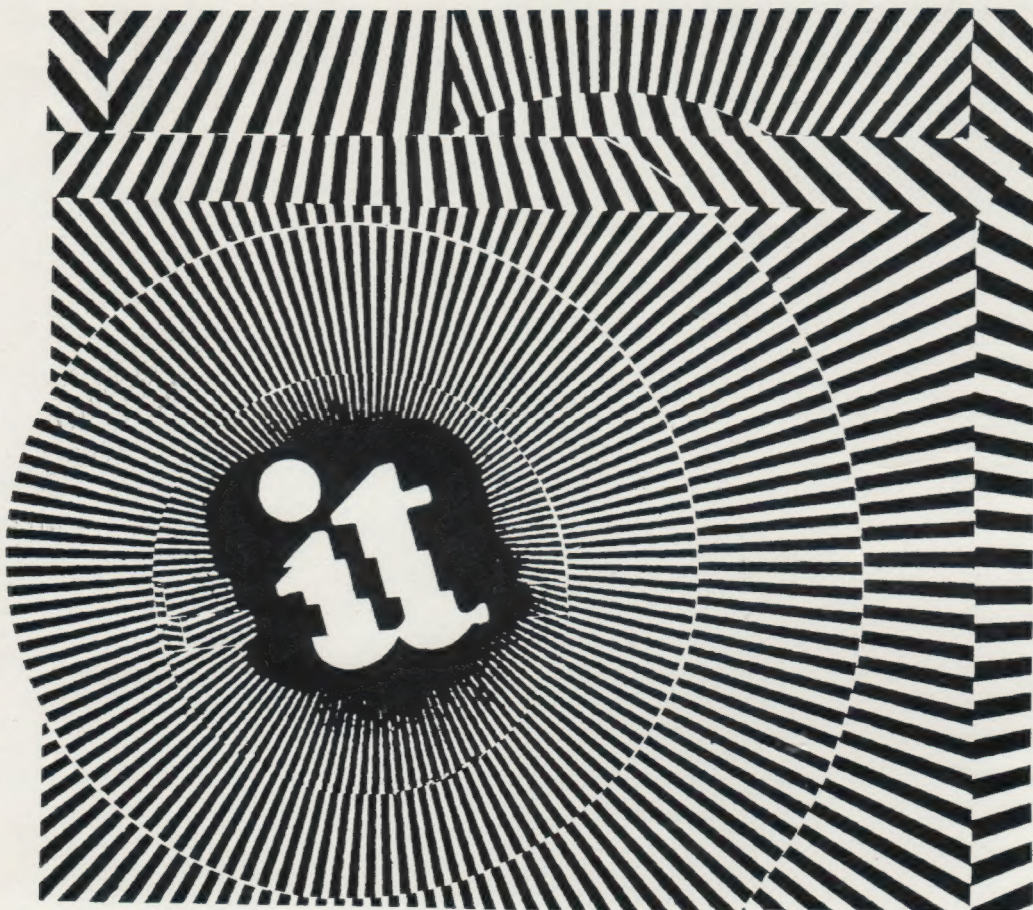
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MAL DEAN

THE NEXT NEW WORLDS

will, because of summer holidays etc., be published on August 15th for August-September. It will contain work by J. G. Ballard, M. John Harrison, Langdon Jones, James Sallis, Brian W. Aldiss, Norman Spinrad, Maxim Jakubowski and others.

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new worlds

Number 192

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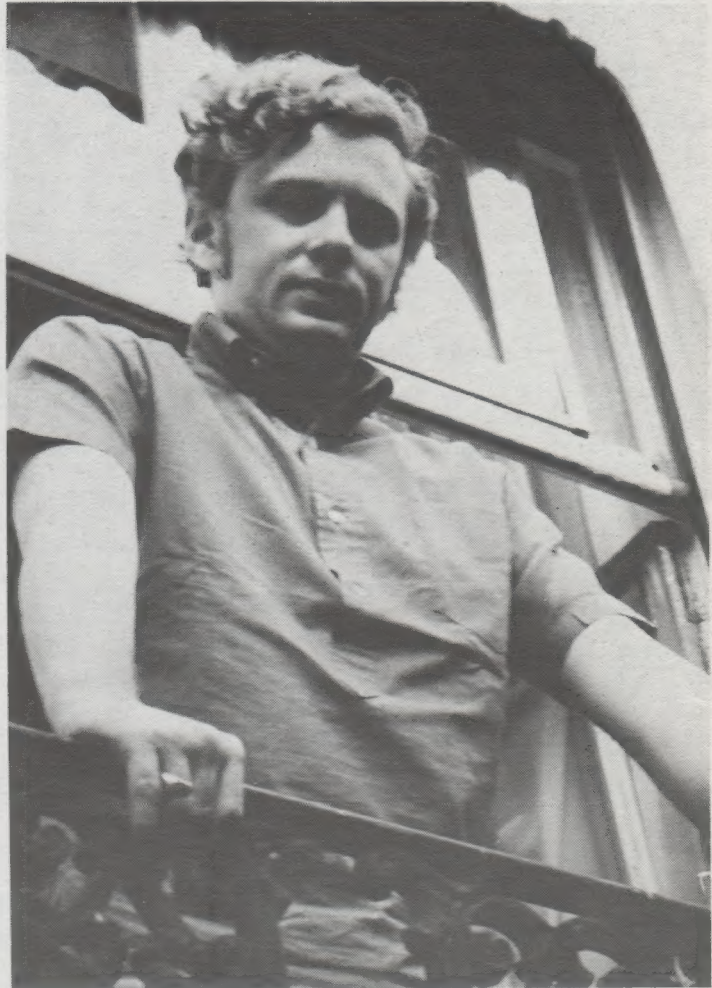
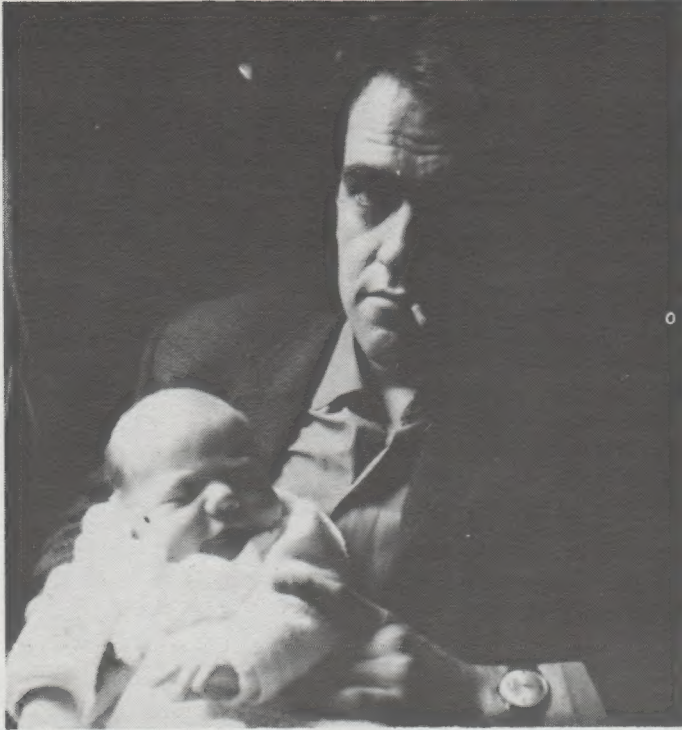
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Subscriptions: 60/- (10 dollars) for twelve issues.

Spinrad: inward, onward and outward

Jones: almost five years



LEAD-IN

FLEEING THE UNITED States and the *Bug Jack Barron* turmoil in the hopes of finding peace, boredom and tranquility in England, I awoke out of my post-travel daze to find myself halfway through the first draft of a **Jerry Cornelius** story. Feeling that it would be easier to complete the story than to figure out why I started writing it in the first place, I plunged inward, onward and outward. Upon reflection, I came to the tentative conclusion that it was a matter of finding a ready-made form for an idea which had been kicking around in my head for a month. *The Last Hurrah of the Golden Horde* was originally conceived as the ultimate 'caper film' and such is the nature of the genre that I was unable to put it into prose until presented with a literary form in which the absence of logical connexions was not only acceptable but a

necessity."

Norman Spinrad's most recent appearance in NEW WORLDS was in number 187, with his short story *The Conspiracy*. But regular readers will probably remember his name from *Bug Jack Barron*, Spinrad's brilliant novel about U.S. power struggles in the 1980s, which we serialised in six parts from NEW WORLDS 178 to 183. It has just been published in hardcover and paperback editions in the United States and will soon, we hope, appear over here.

Spinrad is 28 and, having left the United States for the first time this year, is planning on an indefinite stay in London.

Graham Charnock's *The Erogenous Zone* is the fourth in a series of inter-related stories. *Crim* (NEW WORLDS 184) constituted a blueprint

from which *The Death Layout* and *Sub-Entropic Evening* were developed (appearing in NEW WORLDS 188 and 191). Charnock's first appearance was in our New Writers issue; he hopes to continue the present series of stories with the eventual aim of incorporating them in a novel.

Terry Champagne is 21, born in Los Angeles, California, currently living in London. She has written fiction and non-fiction for American magazines. This is her first publication in England. She also produces eccentric sculpture and is at present working on her first novel.

Brian Aldiss's latest contribution to NEW WORLDS is self-explanatory. It is the first long piece of non-fiction of his that we have run and we think it will be of particular interest to regular

T. Champagne: eccentric sculpture



Charnock: Erogenous Zone



readers. We intend to publish other extracts from *The Shape of Further Things* (which is the first draft of a projected book) in subsequent issues. The book is an idiosyncratic volume, being essentially, we suppose, a kind of conversation with the reader. It would be interesting if readers were to join in the conversation in reality. If we receive enough good letters we will publish some of them in a later issue.

Langdon Jones is another regular contributor whose most recent work was *Ludwig van Beethoven II* (NEW WORLDS 183) and *Flower Gathering* (his first and last concrete poem) in NEW WORLDS 191. A keen golfer, horologist and student of the orangutan. Jones has recently edited a volume of stories, *The New SF*, which will be published this autumn by Hutchinson. Jones is 27 and has been associated with the editing of this

magazine for almost five years.

It is now, in fact, five years (and fifty issues) since the magazine first changed policy, publishers and editors, and appeared in its paperback format. During that period we have again changed format, faced the bankruptcy of one distributor, the collapse of three publishers, the banning of the magazine by John Menzies (who are, incidentally, at it again) and W. H. Smith and the general disapproval of that great fraternity of philistines who have, down the years, tut-tutted at Shakespeare, Sterne, Dickens, Lawrence, Joyce and most of the other writers who are still worth reading. In the face of intolerance and incomprehension we have continued our policy of improving the standards of modern fiction and actively encouraging young writers to meet

those standards. During that period of five years (since Michael Moorcock took over the editorship) we have attracted a growing readership of people themselves intolerant of the debased and moribund standard of most fiction produced (and, for that matter, also actively encouraged) today. The audience is growing, the standards are getting higher, the philistines are getting nastier and more oppressive. Perhaps in another five years the battles will be won and we can all relax. We hope, too, in those next five years to continue in our efforts to expand the range of fiction and poetry, both in terms of technique and subject matter, without losing sight of our intention to make our contents lively, stimulating and entertaining to the people who have made it possible for us to survive the past five years, our readers. ■



langdon jones
the garden of
delights

HE CLAMBERED DOWN from the bus and stood still for a moment, looking about him as if in bewilderment, while people jostled him from behind. He began to move slowly, conscious of placing one foot before the

other, walking along the grass verge. He could see the drive already, half hidden by the hedge, only a short distance from the bus stop. There was a strong smell of foliage coming from the hedges, mingled with the slighter scent of

the blooms that stirred gently in the breeze, and perhaps it was this smell that made his memories so acute at this moment. He had nearly reached the drive; it was only a short distance, but it had seemed so far when he had been young. Now his feet were leaving the grass, and he was conscious of the feel of gravel beneath his soles. He had a brief moment of near-panic—a strong desire to turn round and leave, and never return to this place. He stood still, afraid to turn the corner, knowing that if he took a few more paces there would be nothing at all between himself and his past. He was suddenly conscious of the utter smallness of his body, sensing the great sky above him and the earth beneath, the galaxy surrounding him, the universe beyond. He felt as though his body was supporting a great weight; or rather, as though his mind was supporting a psychological weight, much less tangible, but a million times heavier. He staggered forward a pace. Perhaps the sun was affecting his mind. He put up an arm to shield his eyes, deliberately walked on, and abruptly the oppressive feelings disappeared. He smiled to himself at the intrusion of his own imaginative proclivities at this particular moment when, after turning this bend in the drive, it would all be there before his eyes. He could see the front garden already, and could see that it was overgrown, a mass of nettles and brambles. A tree had been choked by ivy.

And now he could see it.

Even in the brilliant light of the afternoon sun the house presented a forbidding appearance. Although the front garden was no longer as he remembered it, and although the windows were broken, and part of the house obscured by the flank of a bright yellow bulldozer, the sight of it was still enough to fill him with a sense of unease, the feeling the house had always given him, and a kind of horrified nostalgia.

He had not seen the house for nine years. He was unable to explain to himself why he had come back here, when by this time next week the house would no longer exist. He had few happy memories of the lifetime he had spent here, and these were destroyed by the horror of his mother's death, and the family's precipitate departure after the compulsory purchase order.

The wall that had surrounded the front garden now lay in rubble among the thistles and the overgrown privet bushes. Although he wanted nothing more than to see the house reduced to a pile of rubble, yet he had the strange notion that in demolishing the house, the workmen would be destroying something of enormous importance that transcended the physical presence of the building; something that could never be created again. Perhaps it was that this house, in which he had spent his first fourteen years, represented his life, and that the workmen's tools would be destroying not only a building, but his childhood.

Despite the evidence of destruction, on this Sunday afternoon there was a feeling of peace over the whole scene. The decaying building looked as though it would continue to decay, finally dying a natural death and turning into an overgrown mound, being absorbed into the undergrowth, and becoming part of the countryside. It was strange to be standing here like this and seeing the house, its brickwork lit by the sun, its walls beginning to succumb to the ivy, hearing the birds singing in the trees; it had a feeling of

calm that had never been in evidence while he was living there. Perhaps the tension had come, primarily, from his parents, who lived in a kind of truce of co-existence, a truce which concealed a strange mixture of hostility and compassion.

His earliest memory. His mother, not as she must have been then, but as he remembered her later—the drawn face of an old woman. She sits in a chair, her head resting on the back. He plays with a model car on the carpet at her feet. The lines of the pattern have become roads; a matchbox is a garage. She is wearing blue slippers. His father has come in from his special room—the one he is not allowed to enter.

"Marcia, where the hell are my papers?" A loud voice. An angry voice. He feels frightened.

"Which papers?" His mother's voice is very quiet.

"There was a green folder, with a large plan and some papers on top of it. What the hell have you done with it?"

"Oh those; I put those in your cupboard on the right."

"Why do you always feel it necessary to move my things?"

"I've got to clean up, haven't I?"

"Clean up? Clean up? I wouldn't mind so much if you *did* clean up! You haven't touched this place for I don't know how long. It's filthy. Filthy! There's dust an inch thick in my study. There's a sink full of washing-up. I don't know what's come over you lately; at one time you kept this place spick and span, now you don't seem to care about what kind of conditions we live in."

"I'm sorry, darling, I don't know what's wrong; I've been so tired lately."

"Tired? I'm tired too. Tired of trying to bring up a young child in a pig-sty." His father's voice suddenly becomes more gentle. "Look, why don't you go round and see the doctor in the morning? He'll be able to give you a tonic or something."

When his father leaves the room, he suddenly feels tears running down his face. He is taken up, and is surrounded by his mother.

"There, there, my darling Robin, don't cry. He doesn't really mean it."

He buries his face in her softness, and gradually his unhappiness gives way to warmth and pleasure.

Slates are missing from the roof. There is a slight smell of decay coming from the building. The lawn, once a neat oval in front of the house, is now a shapeless patch of wild grass and brambles. All over the front of the Georgian building, paint that was once white and is now a shade of greyish cream, is peeling in great swathes from the plaster. It is strange that at the period in the life of a building when time is most critical—the moment at which demolition has just begun—it should look so timeless. It was as if this house had always been here, and would remain for ever—an unalterable fact of existence, like a mountain or an ocean. He walks across the garden, brambles whipping at his legs, and stands before the front door.

His mother has gone away, and has been gone for ages. He feels very unhappy, as if he will never see her again. His



brother, who sleeps in the room next to his, and who is nearly as grown-up as his father—a fourteen year old, nothing like a baby of five—has been very sad as well; he can tell. He is in bed, and Daddy comes up to see him. He can remember only a little of this conversation.

"She is very ill. She will be coming back here the day after tomorrow, but she's had a very serious operation, and she will have to spend a lot of time in bed. Now I don't want you to worry her in any way. She must have a great deal of rest, and I'm going to make sure she gets it. So you'll have to be very, very good."

"Why is Mummy ill? She hasn't done anything."

"People get ill; they don't have to be very bad."

"I think God is wicked to let Mummy be ill."

"Now don't say things like that. If we both pray for her as hard as we can, she may be quite better soon."

His father had left, and he had been very unhappy. Instead of saying his usual prayers that night he had said, "I hate you, God, for making Mummy ill, and I think you are very wicked. I'll kill you, God!"

The glass in the front door had been smashed, and now one could see through into the blackness of the hall. Inside, he could see dirty floorboards, and the broken plaster of the walls. Over one of the smashed panes there was a translucent spider-web, moving gently in the air. Now he was so close the house looked much smaller than he remembered it. This gave him a feeling of security, a sense that his memories could no longer hurt him. He wondered again about his motives in coming here. On hearing that the council were at last going to go ahead with the main road, after an even longer than typical delay of nine years, he had felt an imperious summons to return here, as if it were

essential that he have this final meeting with the house. As if, perhaps, he would learn something here, something he had never learned in all the years he had lived here.

He pushed open the front door, and it swayed in at a crazy angle, its top hinge no longer attached. The hat stand was still there, where it always had been; many things that his father had deemed useless had been left behind in their hurried, unnecessary departure. Even the mirror was still there, but it had been smashed, and broken pieces of glass littered the floor. He stepped inside the hall, conscious of the now-strong smell of damp plaster and decay. Bricks lay scattered all over the floor, and someone had written obscenities in bright red paint all over one of the walls. To the right the staircase still swept upward, but now many of the bannisters were missing, and he could see a hole in the tread of one of the steps. A piece of flex dangled down at the site of what once had been an elaborate light fitting and, in the corner, a piece of ceiling had fallen down, and now laths were exposed, like the ribs of the house's skeleton.

But it was only the surface that had shifted. All was basically the same. The stairs still curved round; the door to his left still indicated the lounge; another door further down on the right still concealed a large cupboard that filled the space under the staircase; the door at the end of the hall on the right was still the entrance of his father's study. He wondered why, then, he was not filled with the feeling of nostalgia that he had experienced so strongly when he had first caught sight of the house. Perhaps these small changes were enough to blunt the edge of his recollection. Perhaps the bricks littering the floor had at last broken the forbidding atmosphere of this building. There was one room he hoped had not changed; his mother's bedroom.

He is sitting on the sheet. "So we all waited for him down by the bridge, and then we got him and bashed him up!" She puts her head back and laughs, and then sweeps him against her.

"I know he is a bully, and he was fifteen and you're all only eight, but it's wicked to fight, and you mustn't anyway." She looks down on him. "Your face is too lovely for me to see it all cut and bruised." She touches the sore spot on his face.

"It's only a little bruise, and anyway he ran away."

She laughs again, and with his ear against her breast, he can hear the laughter rumbling in those great mysterious spaces inside her where, even now, he knows, a terrible disease is eating her away.

In that room he had seen her for the last time, with the face of an old hag, pieces of cotton wool stuffed into her nostrils, her flesh white and cold, and her face drawn into an expression that could have been a smile or a grimace of agony. But now he wanted to see the room for all the memories it had—not just to remember the times when she had looked younger, for he could only remember her as a woman made prematurely old by illness; in those earlier days he was sure that she had been beautiful—not to censor

his memories, but to remember all, all the pain and unhappiness, so that he could stand and soak in the totality of what his mother had been.

He turned, and began to walk carefully up the stairs.

With the make-up removed, he could see that she was beautiful. And she was young, much younger than he had thought at first. Her face was oval, and gave a remarkable impression of serenity. She had large eyes, and the coloured light was reflected in her gaze as she looked at him intently. Her nose was straight, and it flared at the bottom into wide nostrils, which he could see were moving with the deep breaths she took. Her lips were full, but pale. Her face was full of paradoxes. It was a face that showed a deep sensuality, but at the same time a basic serenity of soul; it showed, in her high cheekbones and the set of her features, a great deal of strength, but at the same time a frightening frailty. She was young, but at this moment she seemed to be ageless, a monument, a figure of legend, as if time no longer had any meaning, as if her beauty could never fade.

A strong gust of wind set the lanterns swaying, and he watched the play of coloured light across the planes of her face. Everything he saw seemed to have an almost frightening significance, a meaning not usually attached to the mundane things of the world. Her dark hair, the swinging string of lanterns, the feel of the wind on his skin, a garden bench with a support broken in its back, the branches above them, moving slowly back and forth.

"I feel," he said slowly, breaking the long silence between them, "that in this garden there is—everything. As though all the time in the world has been gathered up here, and that this night will be an eternity for us."

"As though there is nothing," she said, her voice quiet, and almost drowned by the sighing of the leaves, "nothing at all in the world that can hurt us at this moment. That nothing exists apart from this moment. That we are the only breathing people in a world that is somehow our own world."

There was a gust of laughter from the house. Through the french windows he could see people moving about inside the brightly-lit room.

"How old are you?" he asked, not believing that she had an age.

"My dear sir," she said, with an odd, half hearted parody of primness, knowing that it was a question he had to ask, "that is hardly a polite question for a young lady to answer. But I'm nineteen."

"I'm twenty-three," he said. "I don't think I've ever seen anyone as beautiful as you."

"What are you called?"

"Robin."

"Robin. Robin. I love you, Robin."

"And I love you."

There was a tinkle of breaking glass from the house, and another roar of laughter. Reclining, as they were, on the grassy slope, their heads were turned toward each other, and her eyes were still fixed on his.

She spoke again.

"I feel that I ought to laugh at this strange conversation we're having. I've never spoken like this in my life before.



It's as if it's hardly me that's speaking; as if I'm taking part in a play, and the whole scene is laid out before me. I ought to laugh, but at the moment I feel as though I won't be able to laugh again, ever."

As the french windows were opened, a flurry of conversation could be heard. He glanced up, and saw a group of people standing in silhouette outside the french windows, all carrying glasses in their hands.

"We can be seen from here," he said.

She looked up.

"He'll kill me if he finds us. Let's go further down."

He stood up and helped her to her feet. He could feel her warmth through the chiffon of her dress. He put his arm round her, and they walked down the slope into the darkest part of the garden. Here the light from the lanterns reached only faintly, and cast a pale glow on the far wall.

"Here is our place," she said, and she pulled back the branches of a thick bush, slipping through the space between the bush and the wall.

He could see, ahead of him, the skin of her back, the dim flesh touched with the pale colours of the lanterns' light, concealed at her waist, where the lines of her dress—begun at her shoulders by the straps—met, hiding her body from his view. He could see, beyond her, a little sheltered patch of grass, almost totally invisible from the lawn. He knew, as he began to follow her into the arbour, that he would never experience anything like this ever again . . .

He stood looking at the door of his mother's room. To the right, fungus was growing in a riot of orange along the skirting board, like the cancerous disease that had grown in



his mother, until she could live no longer. He had been fourteen. It had been such a long disease. He remembered how, after she had died, he had been plunged into a world that seemed to have no meaning for him. When the wind blew in his face, it was a sensation of the skin. He was conscious of his eyes seeing, his ears hearing; it was as if the real person had curled up inside him, and was now far removed from the interpretation of these purely physical stimuli. It was a paroxysm of mourning, a mourning that had lasted for years. He was not sure that it was yet over.

Her blonde hair was spread on the pillowcase, and the smell of her body was strong as he entered her. She wriggled beneath him, and he was conscious only of distaste, and of the rising muscular tension of his body. His spasms began and in his mind he counted them until his body was relaxed again. She lay quite still. He removed his penis, and carefully wiped it with his handkerchief. He looked at his watch.

"You're not," she said with heavy sarcasm, "exactly a Casanova, are you?"

In the alleyway he was suddenly conscious of the movements behind him. There were many of them. There was still time for flight, but he couldn't be bothered. He turned.

There were four of them, large men, and they advanced threateningly. They had probably mistaken him for someone else. He stepped forward and was immediately plunged into a maelstrom of blows. He hit hard, not caring that he was being hurt as well. He kicked at someone's groin and heard a scream of pain. He felt something splinter under his fist, something else that was soft. And then there was a sudden release of pressure, and, abruptly, he was free. Three men were running down the alleyway. One man was lying on the ground clutching his crutch, moaning. He spat blood, and found a loose tooth with his tongue. There was blood dripping down from his face all over his clothes.

He was really quite badly hurt.

He spread his jacket out on the grass, and they sat down. There was now no more noise from the house; everything was still.

She spoke. "Do you mind if I have a cigarette?"

"No. Of course not."

She felt into her bag, brought out a pack of cigarettes and offered him one.

He refused the cigarette, but then reached forward and caught her arm, bringing the packet into a patch of light. "Minors? Do they still make those?"

"Oh, *don't!*" He too caught her distress, and he felt it as if a sudden cold wind had disturbed the warmth of the evening. She placed the cigarette in a long holder, lit it, and moved closer to him, so that he could feel her warmth. "What are we going to do about this, then?"

"This?"

"This *situation*. Are we going to make love here, and

then go back to the party? Am I going to say to him, 'Darling, it's all off, I met a strange man in the garden and love him. Call off the party, there's no longer an engagement to have a party about.'? Are we going to make love here and then try to forget each other, and marry other people, and know that something forever will be missing from our lives? Or shall I go back to the party now, and try to forget that this ever happened?"

He spoke softly. "You can go back if you want to."

"You know that I can't."

He sighed, and lay down beside her. She shook her head, then stubbed out her cigarette on the grass, and lay back, inside the curve of his arm. The feel of her was electrifying. The flesh of her shoulders was enough to fill his body with an imperious erotic hunger. He leaned over her, and looked down at her face. She was breathing deeply, and her eyes were liquid.

She put up a hand and stroked his face.

"Where have you come from?" she whispered. "You and your funny clothes. Why did you come? My life has been so simple up to now—I just don't know how to cope with this. Oh God, why did we have to meet like this?" She turned her head sharply away from him, and now he could see only her short dark hair, her ear, and a pulse throbbing in her neck. He put out a hand and gently pulled her head back. Tears were running down her face. He slowly lowered his face to hers, and found her lips with his own. He knew, as he felt the softness of her lips and the tip of her nervous tongue, that this night would be the high point of his life, and that after this, there would be nothing for him in the future . . .

He put out his hand to the door handle. He had to force the door open—over the years it had become warped—and then, on his right, he could see the bed. His mother's bed. The bed on which she had died, having refused point blank to enter a hospital, knowing that this was to be her death-bed. Now, after nine years, it stood at a crazy angle, although it was still in the position in which it had always been. He remembered his father going in and out of the room, especially during the last year, carrying trays of food, books for which she had asked, bedpans covered with a white cloth, or even the small cardboard box which apparently contained photographs of them together, during their engagement and wedding that, towards the end, she had asked for frequently. Despite their many arguments and rows, during the long and inexorable course of her illness his father had nursed her, if not with devotion, then with patience until, the day she lay dead in this bed, his duties had been completely discharged. Then a new briskness had come over him. They had gone, for a short while, to stay with an aunt, and then had moved to a flat in the suburbs of London. The three years he had spent in that flat had been almost intolerable. During the whole time he had felt nothing but a near-hatred for his father. All the time, he knew, he was blaming him for the death of his mother, and this feeling, while illogical, was powerful and grew more so, until he finally left, and went to live in a small flat in Kensington. The year after that his brother, then twenty-six, married, and his father was left to live



alone. Now that the man was lonely and showing his age, he found it impossible to hate him any more, and visited him every week. Now, the only reminders of the days of his mother's life were this house and this room.

She is lying back in the bed. He looks down at her face. It is thin, the face of a skeleton. Her skin is wrinkled and old, like the skin of an old woman, but with a yellow shade not normally seen in the flesh of living people. Her hair, grey and tangled, lies all over the pillow case.

He puts out his hand and strokes her brow.

"Oh Robin, I've been thinking so much about you during the last few months. I've been worrying about certain things for years, and—

"You shouldn't worry, Mum, you know it's bad for you. If you rest and take it easy, perhaps you'll be on your feet again one day."

"Oh Robin, Robin, I wish you wouldn't humour me. Or yourself. I'm never going to be on my feet again. You know as well as I do that it won't be long before I die. I can accept it. You'd probably be surprised if you knew what a little thing death is for me. I've never clung to life—never felt it was worth clinging to. At least, not since I was a young girl."

"Oh, don't talk like that, Mum." There are incipient tears in his eyes, and he feels a sense of panic, as he does every time she speaks of her own death.

"Oh, I'm sorry love." She reaches out and draws him close. She lifts up a hand, and gently runs it over his cheek.

"When I look at you I—Oh Robin, if you only knew what I sometimes fancy to myself lying here . . . But it's just the ravings and flutterings of a dying woman's mind—"

She convulses in a spasm of pain, and a loud cry is forced from her. He feels his own face twisting too, in

imitation of her agony. He quickly goes to the door of the room and calls, hearing his cry echoing through the house and echoing through his numb brain, as it has many times before.

"Dad! Dad! Come quick, she's in pain again!"

She is lying back on his jacket. He can see her face below in the shadows, illuminated by a single spot of light that filters through the leaves. Her face is given a pale phosphorescence, like the face of a Madonna. He lowers himself to her. They kiss with urgency, and he thrusts his body against hers. As his mouth travels the skin of her face, her ear, her neck, her shoulder, his hand pushing the shoulder strap down her arm, he feels overwhelmed by what he is experiencing, as if he is perpetually on the point of fainting. Her lips are moving over his neck, and her hands run over his chest and back as if she were eagerly trying to trace the contours of a piece of sculpture. His hand finds the shape of her breast beneath the dress. He can feel the nipple clearly, and as it hardens under his fingers, he realises that she is not wearing a brassiere. He unbuttons her dress, lowers the shoulder straps, and uncovers the upper part of her body, as if he were helping a bud to blossom. They clutch each other, and now he can feel her flesh with his hands, his arms and his lips. She unbuttons his shirt, kissing his flesh with every button, lower and lower. He feels her thighs under the dress, and feels that she is wearing elaborate garters. He rolls her stockings down her legs, and then runs his hand back up to her thighs, hearing the catch in her breath. The backs of his fingers brush between her legs. Her hand is over his prick, and he is filled with an infinite sweetness. He has never known sensations like this before; it is as if their lovemaking has released a mechanism

that until now has been still. Now the levers lift, the wheels spin, and the machine rolls off across the universe, tilted and crackling. He pulls the dress over her head, and sees that she is wearing long, wide, silk knickers. He laughs, his laugh like the humour of the cosmos, and pushes his head between her legs, rubbing his face all over the silk. And now, as he kisses her thighs, and feels the smooth surfaces of her bottom, drawing down the silk pants, he can feel her pulling his last remaining garment over his legs. Now they are both naked, and dimly he can hear the sound of a bird and muted noises from the house-party, but he is conscious only of her scented nakedness, of her hands moving on his flesh. He gently parts the lips of her cunt, and then lowers his mouth to the soft flesh, feeling, at the same time, her mouth, a sensation of such exquisite pleasure that it is almost beyond bearing. As his mind registers that she *is* in fact a virgin, and an answering thought expresses the part of his mind that knew this already, he is too busy to heed it, his frantic tongue travelling over the salty flesh in its quest and his quest to *know* her.

It is dark in his bedroom. There is very dim moonlight, but it serves only to change the room into a collection of frightening shapes. He can hear the tick of the big grandfather clock in the hall; a little while ago it struck eleven. He can also hear the voices of his parents. All day Mum and Dad have been angry with each other; they hadn't said anything bad, but it was easy to tell. He shivers in the bed. He doesn't like Dad shouting at Mum, especially as she's not been well for so long. Two years, what a long time to be ill! He wonders if she will always be ill, will always have to go to bed and rest in the afternoon, will always look so tired. His parents always seem to be angry with each other lately, and yet last year, when they said the war was over, he thought that everything would be all right from then on, and that they would always be happy, and that Mum and Dad wouldn't be angry with each other any more, and that Mummy would get well again. But here he was, hearing their voices raised in anger as he had so often before. He snuggled down in the bed, and tried not to listen. But the sounds they made were too intrusive, and he couldn't ignore them. He sometimes prayed to God when they shouted at each other, but God didn't make them stop, and he found that he didn't like God as much as he had when he'd been little. His stomach was twisted up again, and he would have to go along to the lavatory. He swung his legs out of the bed, and dropped quietly to the floor. He put on his slippers and made his way across the room, taking care not to bump into the table, and opened the door. The landing was very creepy, lit, as it was, only by the stray light from downstairs, and he went as quickly as he could to the lavatory. Once inside he switched on the light and bolted the door, feeling much safer. It was then, as he was sitting there, that he had an idea. He remembered that as he had come along the landing the voices of his parents had been much clearer. If he were to go downstairs and sit on the staircase, he would be invisible from the lounge if the light was on and the door was open, and he would be able to hear what his parents were saying.

He wiped his bottom rather ostentatiously, pulled up his



pyjamas, and then pulled the chain, making sure he was outside before the lavatory made that loud sucking noise. He could still hear his parents' voices, so they hadn't heard the sound of the lavatory.

He made his way back along the landing, and then, step by step, began to descend the staircase, trying hard not to make any creaking noises. Although the door of the lounge was shut, he could still hear the voices quite clearly. When he was nearly at the bottom of the stairs he stopped, and listened. He heard his father's voice first.

"I've tried. I've tried, but what do you think it's like for me?"

"Can't you show me any kind of consideration at all?"

"I try to make allowances. I even try to retain some kind of emotional equilibrium over the children, which is more than you do. By all accounts I should hate Jack and love Robin, but I've tried not to be influenced by the past, and I try to think of Jack as my own son. I think I've succeeded. But you . . . I can't understand it. First of all it was Jack you were all over—he was the only one you cared about; Robin was just an unimportant interruption to you—"

"That's not true!"

"But now, now you've suddenly started turning all your maternal charms on Robin, and you're well on the way to turning him into some kind of pouffy mother's boy!"

"That's not true and you know it! And if you'd just try to understand how—"

"Understand? Understand? How many men would understand the fact that at the altar their bride was three months pregnant by another man?"

"Oh, we've been through all this so many times before! I *tried* to tell you, you know I did, but you wouldn't listen to me. And after that it was no use. I didn't care whether I married you or not; I just felt *sorry* for you."

"Understand. My Christ! And if it had been a proper affair it might have been a bit easier to understand. But it was a casual pick-up, wasn't it? A quick fuck in a bush."

"Oh don't torture yourself with it! It was over fifteen years ago. You know there's never been anyone else since then. And if I've begged your forgiveness once I've begged it a thousand times. I know I was wrong. I know it was a terrible thing to do to a man. But what have I got to do? What can I do?"

"I'll never forget, as long as I live, one thing that summed up your whole stinking attitude. I agreed. All right, we would think of the child as ours, not as a result of his mother's fucking around. And then you told me what you were going to call him. You didn't even ask me! My God, are you surprised that I put my foot down? You're lucky I let you have your way with Robin; although why the name was so important to you I don't know, although I suspect. If my suspicions were correct I don't know what I'd do—but I don't want to think of that. What I am objecting—"

"Why? Why are you persecuting me like this?"

"Me persecuting you? Ha! If ever the day will . . ."

Robin didn't understand what his parents were saying to each other, but he vaguely got the feeling that they were angry at him and Jack, and he felt tears welling up in his eyes. Trying to choke back his sobs, so that his parents wouldn't hear him, he went quietly back upstairs and climbed back into bed.

He walked slowly out of his mother's room, and went back down the staircase, avoiding all the missing treads. Once in the hall he went towards the back of the house, stepping over piles of bricks, and trying to avoid the holes in the floor. The kitchen was a shambles, with the door no longer there, and broken glass all over the floor. The sink had been pulled away from the wall, and had been smashed into chunks of porcelain. Now he was beginning to feel very depressed as all the changes really began to register with him. At that time his life had been bad—he had often been very unhappy—but still it had the kind of qualities that were so lacking in his existence today. He had come from a life of deep miseries but sudden joys, and was now in a strange flat land, a hinterland of the mind, in which the weather was always grey, the climate bland, and the population unimportant.

He went out of the kitchen entrance, into the back garden. He was horrified at the changes that had occurred here. He had always loved the garden, and had spent much of his time here, and he hated to see it in such a state of barrenness. The front garden had been overgrown and luxuriant, but here the predominant colours were brown and yellow. There was a terrace at the back of the house, and then a paved path led right down, almost the whole extent of the lawn. The lawn was now covered by scrubby grass and a few bushes. The path was uneven, and he walked carefully along it. The flower beds were almost indistinguishable from what had been the lawn; they now displayed nothing more than stringy nettles and yellow grass. The garden now had a depressing aspect once peculiar only to the house. The only things he really recognised

were the metal lamp standards that flanked the path, some of which were by now very crooked, the fountain, past the end of the path, just before the lawn sloped down to the far wall, now dry and cracked, the garden bench on the right, and the little cherub statue at the end of the path. He patted the cherub's behind, as if in condolence.

By now it was impossible to convince himself that she had much more time to live. Death was written on her terrible face, lined with years of agony; death was written in the movements of her crabbed hands as they plucked and pulled at the sheets. It was there in the constant spasmodic pain, relieved only by frequent morphine injections; in the shouts and groans that she was no longer able to prevent.

Today she was very agitated. Her mouth quivered like the mouth of a senile old woman. There were egg-stains on her nightdress. She gabbled something at him, but he was hardly able to hear what she said now, and she dribbled saliva down her chin. He wiped her mouth, and said, "Just try to lie quietly, Mother."

She writhed on the bed in what looked like a parody of impatience, and then screamed briefly as she was struck by another convulsive wave of pain.

"Robin! Robin!" she was calling.

He hoped that she was not going to have a really bad spell. It was strange how one became so detached from someone in this condition. It was as if one could divide one's mind into compartments, so that his mother would be on one level, and this gibbering, scarcely-human creature on another. Perhaps this was just a defence against the pain she was suffering. There was no pleasure at all in the life she had remaining; just a declining resistance to pain.

"Robin!" she called, only quieter this time. Her breath had been rasping very badly for the last two days, and now, it suddenly seemed to be much worse; it was as though she was having difficulty in breathing at all. He wondered if he should call his father. He made a move towards the door, and then was horrified to feel a hand clutching his arm. He looked back and saw that his mother was sitting up in bed looking at him with piercing eyes. He stifled the revulsion he felt at her clutching hand, and turned back to her. Was she looking at him, or was she looking rather at something in her own head? She had not been strong enough to sit up for months. What had happened?

"Robin," she said in a clear voice. "Robin, my darling, I love you." And then the hand tightened briefly, painfully before relaxing and falling away.

She had fallen back on the bed, her eyes still open, still with a strange, intent expression on her face.

She did not move.

He was in no doubt at all that she was dead.

To add the final indignity to her end, from under the sheets came the sound of a liquid fart.

She was dead.

She was dead.

He would never see her again.

Now he was filled with a desire to be in her; a desire that was pulling his prick towards her thighs, and a desire was in



her that was thrusting her body towards him. He had wanted to prolong their love-making as much as possible, but they were no longer able to remain two. He lay on top of her, looking down at her face. He moved closer, touched, penetrated a fraction, and she winced. He remained still for a while, all the time with his eyes fixed on hers, knowing that his eyes were communicating the same message that he could read in her gaze. A little more, and she gave a small gasp of pain. He began to withdraw slightly, but her head turned from side to side. "No . . . no . . ." she said, and he felt her fingers digging into the flesh of his buttocks, urging him forward. He moved, in response to her fingers, and slid inside her, while she caught her breath and bit her lip. And he was there. This was where he belonged. It was just like coming home. He had never felt this with another woman, that here, in the soft wet spaces of her vagina, was the very place for which he had been made, that their bodies had been designed to fit together perfectly, as if once they had been one creature; a single unit, and that some time in the past they had been cruelly parted.

But now they were together, and they lay there quietly, looking into each other's eyes, feeling the sensations of each other's bodies, sensations that they had never experienced before.

"I think I am a virgin, too," he said.

He was to see her tomorrow; now, in bed, he was trying to visualise her face in his mind. But it was impossible. Nothing would come clear in his head; his thoughts were swirling like gas over a bog. Death was so cursory; he wished there was something he could do to express the numb dismay he felt at this moment, and to honour his mother's name. It was as if the world was due to end, and

had not, and he was still here, but feeling as unsuited to life as a frog in a desert. Planets should have cracked, galaxies collapsed, the whole universe slid down a vortex and disappeared. But here he was, lying in bed, and the rest of his life was spread out before him like a long straight road, with featureless countryside on either side. Soon there was to be the funeral, a ludicrously inappropriate ritual, and then he would become one of those people who are obsessed by a small patch of ground; whose life revolves round the burial-place of the dead. But perhaps there was something he could do. Perhaps he could pay her his last respects in his own way, in his own words, not repeating the chanting doggerel of some priest.

He climbed out of bed, naked and shivering, and got into his dressing gown. He quietly opened the door of his bedroom, and stood listening intently. There was no sound from his father's room. He carefully moved out on to the landing, and then made his way quietly to his mother's room. He listened outside for a while, then opened the door and went in.

From now on the moment was ceremonial. Everything had become invested with a symbolic kind of significance. Every movement in the ritual must be slow; must be carried out with great delicacy and understanding. His every gesture must have some kind of ceremonial meaning.

Although he could see the vague shape of her on the bed, there was no sense of there being another person in the room. Apart from the sounds of his own body, the room was totally quiet. He walked slowly across the room and stood, for a moment, at the foot of her bed. Then he turned, and felt his way over to her dressing table. He felt for the handles of the top drawer, then slowly slid it open.

Inside were the things he knew he would find. A box of long, thin candles, some jewellery, and an ornate crucifix. He opened the box of candles, withdrew one of them, and lit it. The room was filled with a warm yellow glow. He walked across the room with the candle held high above his head, and then slowly placed it to one side of her headboard.

The men had been at her already. Pieces of cotton wool had been stuffed up her nose and into her mouth. Her cheeks were now rounded with a fake vitality that she'd never had in life. Her mouth was drawn into a horrible grimace. Her eyes were closed.

He walked with a slow tread back to the dressing table and lit another candle. There were now hardly any shadows in the room; all was bathed in a warm even light. He slowly walked across to her bed with the other candle held high, and then placed it carefully by the other side of the headboard. In the same way he positioned two more candles, one on either side of the foot of the bed. The bed was now lit by a bright illumination, and there were no shadows at all on her face. She looked like a bland effigy made from white wax. He knelt briefly by the side of her bed, and then stood up and went back to the dressing table. He picked up a cushion from a nearby chair, and placed it on the smooth top of the dressing table. From the jewel box he withdrew a glittering necklace. Holding it at arm's length, for a while he watched the smooth light of the candles as it was reflected a hundredfold in the facets of the little stones, to produce a ribbon of fire. Then he placed the



necklace carefully in the centre of the cushion, lifted cushion and necklace, and deliberately transferred them to a small table by the side of the bed. Then, bending forward, he briefly pressed his lips against the little string of jewels. He picked up the necklace again, turned, and laid it across the neck of his dead mother, shuddering at the feel of her stone-cold flesh. He was not able to fix it at the back, but tucked the loose ends in at the back of her neck, and arranged the necklace so that it appeared to be worn normally. He straightened, then turned, and walked back to the dressing table. From the jewel box he selected another necklace, and fixed it carefully and seriously round his own neck. Then he picked up the crucifix and, holding it in the palms of flat hands, he returned to his mother's side. He placed it on the cushion at the side of the bed. The bed had not been made for someone to be comfortable in, and the sheets were tucked in tightly; he loosened them, and folded back the sheets, so that her green nightdress was revealed down to the waist. He picked up the crucifix, and reverently placed it between her breasts, then bent again,

and gave it a lingering kiss. Then he rose, and moved slowly round to the foot of the bed. He knelt, closing his eyes.

Now he felt that in some way he was in communion with her, and his closeness gave him a sense of comfort and warmth. The candles had given the room a sense of intimacy, suggesting by their yellow light, that there was nothing at all outside the room, that nothing else existed. He mumbled words to her, not prayers, but words of love, memories and dreams. The moment was hushed and magical.

But as he spoke he felt a sudden stirring in his groin, and a wave of his imperious adolescent sexuality. His words faltered into silence, and he felt for a moment horrified, as if he had violated a church. But then, as he looked at the room, the jewels, the corpse, the ceiling, yellow with the candles' light, he realised that it was all right, that it fitted, and he allowed it to go on, permitting himself to be washed by these powerful waves, his hands going nervously to his erect penis. He took off the dressing gown, and stood naked at the foot of her bed. His body was quivering, and his hand moved back and forward in the rhythms of sex, his eyes fierce, and his lips whispering to her. He leaned forward, as if in torment, and with one hand supported himself on the footboard of the bed, which in turn began to shake slightly, the jewels at her neck sparkling with this movement. And then his face was twisted with the waves of an ecstasy that he had never felt before, and he had to bite his lips to prevent himself from crying out, and as he came, in a great wash of colours, and as the young semen fell in drops on to the bed, he kept his eyes, all the time, on her.

The trees did not have many leaves, even though it was the height of summer; it was as though a strange blight had fallen on the garden, and living things now avoided this place. He took his hand from the cherub, and looked back towards the house. He was mesmerised by it; it was impossible to take his eyes away. It seemed that the longer he stayed here, the more meaning the house seemed to have for him. The picture of the building as it was, half-decaying, and illuminated by the afternoon sun, was totally compelling. The house was gaining, every moment, a strange kind of importance, as if here was the vortex of a field of forces, and the bricks were sucking into themselves a vast amount of a totally intangible material. He had a sudden feeling of being very close to his past. The house in his memory seemed as close as the house he was now watching. There was a flash of darkness in front of his eyes. He was beginning to get imaginative again. He deliberately cleared his mind of thoughts.

He could see the terrace, the french windows, the kitchen, the upper storey with the great bay windows and, in the roof, the smaller windows of the attic. The roof was very red. The pattern of the tiles reminded him of the patterns of electronic circuitry, and he could imagine the roof alive, crawling with strange forces. A flash of darkness in front of his eyes. He saw that in a way the house could never really be destroyed, for it was a little part of the universe, as wide as that, as high as that, as deep as that, as old as that, and in that section of time it would exist always. A flash of darkness. He looked at the roof, and in its patterns he suddenly found a truth that he had never seen before. He knew that he had learned something from



that red tile, from the whole house, that would have been unimaginable before. Darkness. Light again. He sensed that the house was not the object that he now saw, but a form, a perfect form, that stretched through the cold winds of time. Darkness—lights within the darkness. Light. And suddenly he could see that the darkness he was intermittently seeing, was just another aspect of this summer light. Darkness—lights. Daylight. That the sky, when it became dark, was just another aspect of itself that he had been unable to see before now. If one holds a photographic negative over a dark surface in such a way that the light is striking it at an acute angle, sometimes the image can be seen as a positive one, and yet, at the same time can be understood as a negative. Darkness—coloured lights—house—stars. Daylight. The periods of darkness were becoming more frequent and longer, but he knew that it was just a matter of his own perceptions, and that the light sky he kept seeing was, in a sense, just an aspect of this night, just a subtle shifting of perspective. Light. The night again. He tried not to allow too many thoughts to enter his mind, and just to experience these perceptions. He sensed that too much thought could be dangerous. Light. The night again. But the flashes of light were becoming less frequent, and shorter, the night was drawing in again. He could see the stars, and he looked at these, waiting for this strange time to pass. A flash of light. The stars were cut off where the roof of the house was silhouetted against the sky. A flash of light in front of his eyes. He could hear a cricket singing from somewhere in the distance, but as he listened

for it, the sound ceased. Now he could hear only the trickling of the little fountain. With the light shining from the french windows, and the people moving about inside, with radiance cast on the terrace, the house looked quite beautiful. The scent of blossom was heavy on this July night, and he drew in a deep breath and looked round, at the trees, at the lanterns, strung on wires running between the lamp standards, and at the house. He began to walk slowly about the garden.

And as he watched her face beneath him, he began, slowly, to move. And he felt the world moving with him, the garden, the blossom, the trees, all taking part in this vast act of love. She moaned, beneath him, and he felt his movements to be part of the universe, part of the gigantic mechanism, the enormous clock, its wheels as big as a galaxy. And as he moved in her time passed without either of them being aware of it, but both sensing the movement of the stars, planets, continents, people, atoms, in the movements their bodies were making. He felt as though he were taking part in a ritual dance, and that each movement that they both made was recorded somewhere in an enormous tome, in pages of minute symbols. He was now moving faster, and the sense of plunging into her body caused him to shake and moan, as also she was convulsed and crying out, and their hips, twisting and plunging, were moving of their own volition, their vibrations making a sound, a song, the song of the stars.

And then he heard a door opening at the back of the house, and saw a young woman standing outside the kitchen entrance. She was wearing a long evening dress, and was carrying a glass. She stepped out on to the terrace and looked up at the sky. There was something about her that was strangely familiar; something about the set of her body, her attitude, and even from this distance he found her compellingly attractive.

And then she caught sight of him, and began to walk down the garden path towards him. As she got nearer and nearer, as he saw her body moving under the green dress, as her face became clearer, he began to breathe more deeply, wanting to take her in his arms, feeling a desire he had never felt for any other.

She stood in front of him, looking up at him. Her dress, he could now see, was a very pale green, with a 'V' neck and shoulder straps. She was wearing a simple necklace. Her hair was short, cropped, with a curl curving forward under each ear.

When she spoke her voice was slow, serious and wondering.

"Who are you?"

"I . . . I . . . nobody . . . I don't know." Just who was he? He spoke again. "Who are *you*?"

"I . . . I can't tell you. I feel that I shouldn't tell you. Please don't ask me to."

Her face was heavily made up, but he could see her large dark eyes, and the shape of her features, and knew that she was very lovely. The coloured lanterns moved above their heads, and the changing colours emphasised her attractiveness.

The garden was absolutely still.

"What a strange meeting!" he said.

She smiled.

"You feel what I feel, don't you?"

He nodded.

"I don't know how I know; I just do."

"We seem to know everything about each other," he said. "It's as though we are closer to each other than any two people have ever been before."

"I think we are going to make love."

"Yes."

"I am a virgin, you know. I've never been with a man before."

"This is so strange."

"Oh God, what will happen? I'm going to be married soon. That is what this party is all about. I suddenly don't know whether I love him or not."

"I would like to see you without make-up. Can we take it off?"

She nodded, and moved towards the little fountain. He watched her as she bent over and washed her face, and as he looked at her slim form it seemed to him that her body was at once familiar and strange. He handed her his handkerchief, and she dried her skin. He walked further along the garden, to the slope where the lawn inclined down to meet the far wall, and after a few moments she joined him, lying down beside him, smiling.

With the make-up removed, he could see that she was beautiful. And she was young, much younger than he had

thought at first. Her face was oval, and gave a remarkable impression of serenity. She had large eyes, and the coloured light was reflected in her gaze as she looked at him intently. Her nose was straight, and it flared at the bottom into wide nostrils, which he could see were moving with the deep breaths she took. Her lips were full, but pale. Her face was full of paradoxes. It was a face that showed a deep sensuality, but at the same time a basic serenity of soul; it showed, in her high cheekbones and the set of her features, a great deal of strength, but at the same time a frightening frailty. She was young, but at this moment she seemed to be ageless, a monument, a figure of legend, as if time no longer had any meaning, as if her beauty could never fade.

A strong gust of wind set the lanterns swaying, and he watched the play of coloured light across the planes of her face. Everything he saw seemed to have an almost frightening significance, a meaning not usually attached to the mundane things of the world. Her dark hair, the swinging string of lanterns, the feel of the wind on his skin, a garden bench with a support broken in its back, the branches above them, moving slowly back and forth.

"I feel," he said slowly, breaking the long silence between them, "that in this garden there is—everything. As though all the time in the world has been gathered up here, and that this night will be an eternity for us."

"As though there is nothing," she said, her voice quiet, and almost drowned by the sighing of the leaves, "nothing at all in the world that can hurt us at this moment. That nothing exists apart from this moment. That we are the only breathing people in a world that is somehow our own world."

There was a gust of laughter from the house. Through the french windows he could see people moving about inside the brightly-lit room.

"How old are you?" he asked, not believing that she had an age.

"My dear sir," she said, with an odd, half-hearted parody of primness, knowing that it was a question he had to ask, "that is hardly a polite question for a young lady to answer. But I'm nineteen."

"I'm twenty-three," he said. "I don't think I've ever seen anyone as beautiful as you."

"What are you called?"

"Robin."

"Robin. Robin. I love you, Robin."

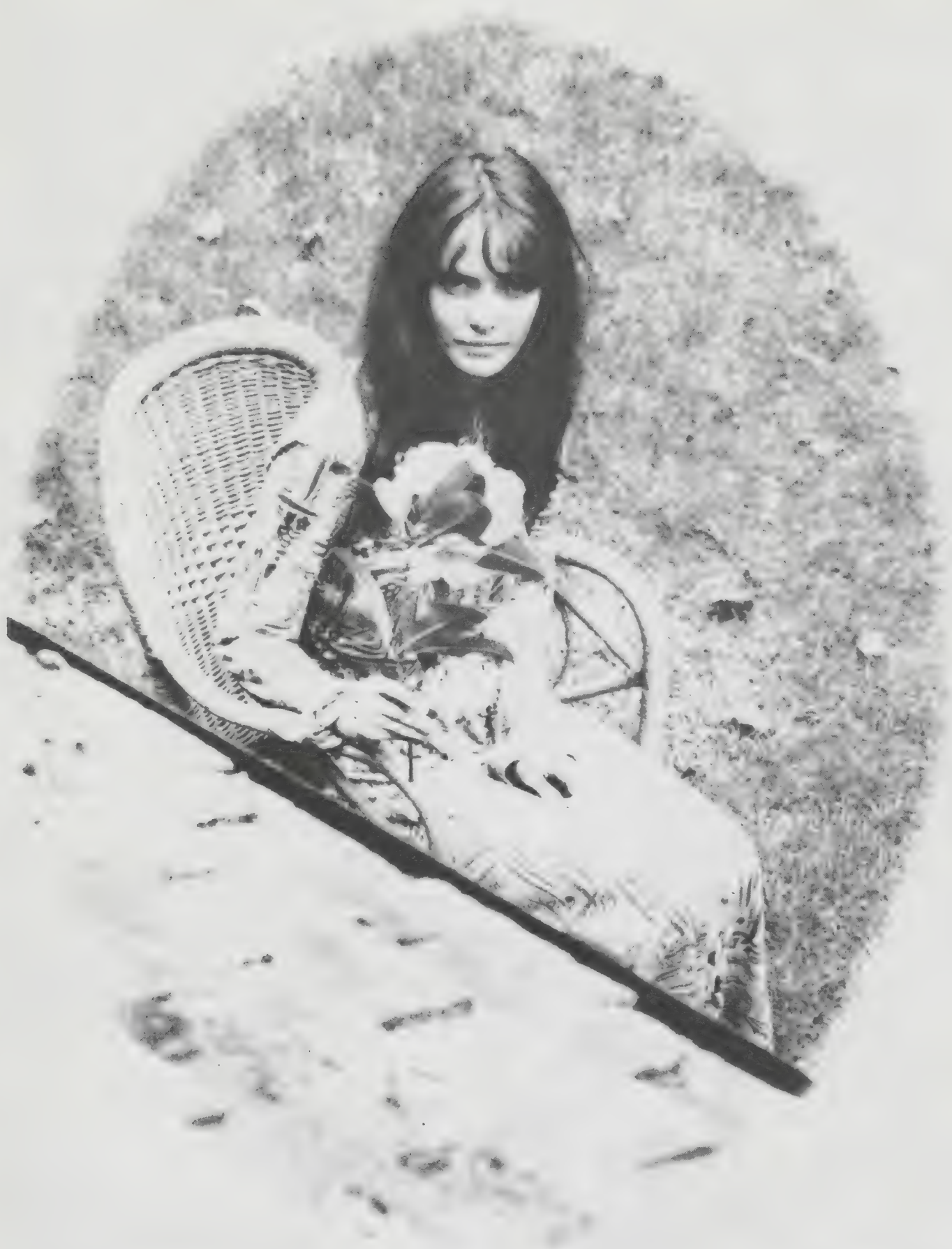
"And I love you."

There was a tinkle of breaking glass from the house, and another roar of laughter. Reclining, as they were, on the grassy slope, their heads were turned toward each other, and her eyes were still fixed on his.

She spoke again.

"I feel that I ought to laugh at this strange conversation we're having. I've never spoken like this in my life before. It's as if it's hardly me that's speaking; as if I'm taking part in a play, and the whole scene is laid out before me. I ought to laugh, but at the moment I feel as though I won't be able to laugh again, ever."

As the french windows were opened, a flurry of conversation could be heard. He glanced up, and saw a group of people standing in silhouette outside the french windows, all carrying glasses in their hands.



"We can be seen from here," he said.

She looked up.

"He'll kill me if he finds us. Let's go further down."

He stood up and helped her to her feet. He could feel

her warmth through the chiffon of her dress. He put his arm round her, and they walked down the slope into the darkest part of the garden. Here the light from the lanterns reached only faintly, and cast a pale glow on the far wall.

"Here is our place," she said, and she pulled back the branches of a thick bush, slipping through the space between the bush and the wall. He could see, ahead of him, the skin of her back, the dim flesh touched with the pale colours of the lanterns' light, concealed at her waist, where the lines of her dress—begun at her shoulders by the straps—met, hiding her body from his view. He could see, beyond her, a little sheltered patch of grass, almost totally invisible from the lawn. He knew, as he began to follow her into the arbour, that he would never experience anything like this ever again. . . .

They moved together violently, their loving now the only fact of the universe. There was nothing except each other, and they moved like a single creature.

Their violence in love was a kind of tenderness. It was a total freedom which they had given each other, a total trust. He could no longer feel the summer night; he could feel only her body, his body, he could hear only the sounds they made. Their movement, too, was a kind of stasis, a still eternity of sensation, as though they were both suspended in space, and nothing was happening, nothing was moving.

But the dance was coming to its conclusion. He was conscious of a growing sweetness, communicated from her, as her head began to move from side to side, and he heard the regular moans coming from her throat.

The feelings grew, widened, became a field of white; an iridescent snowscape, and she began to cry out, and he was falling into a void, seeing her face expressing her sweet agony, and then there was nothing but whiteness in his brain, and he dimly heard his own cries, and a scream which was torn from her. And then nothing but the surges, and, for a moment, he felt that he was her and she was him, and throughout the whistling void of time they would never be parted.

And then they were still.

This moment after was like death, and they were still sharing this, having come through the storms together.

Her face was totally blank. She looked as though there was no more life within her.

And as he lay in her, he began to be conscious again of the passing of time, and as each minute went by, it was one minute less of the time they had remaining. And he knew that there were not many minutes left.

As if she sensed this, she opened her eyes, and gazed deeply at him.

"Oh darling!" she whispered.

And it was nearly over. He knew that he would have to get up and put on his clothes, for the time was almost run out. He withdrew from her, feeling a terrible sense of loss, and knowing, by the movement of her eyes, that she felt this too. He stood up.

"Perhaps," she said, still lying in an attitude of abandon, "this has ruined my life. It will certainly affect my whole future. And yet I know that as long as I live, I will never regret this."

As he dressed, he looked at her.

"I know. If I never live again, at least I lived tonight in a way I never have before."

And as he put on his jacket, he knew that he had to walk

back to the cherub. He stood looking at her for the last time, as she lay with her arms and legs outspread, like a fallen statue. The swinging of the lanterns made her body seem to be moving gently, an echo of their lovemaking. The bushes stirred in a soft breeze. There was a flash of light.

"I've got to go now," he said.

Her eyes opened wide.

"I know," she said.

He began, slowly, to walk backwards away from her, keeping his eyes fixed on hers. He could see that she was crying.

"Oh God, Robin," she called, "I hope I'm pregnant. I hope to God I'm pregnant!"

The branches of the bush were now beginning to hide her body from his view. A flash of light. But he could still see her face.

"Goodbye, my darling," he said.

A last branch swung into place, and cut off the communion of their eyes. He felt as though a vital organ had been torn from his body.

As he walked back to the cherub, through the flashing lights of his mind, he heard her voice for the last time.

"Robin, my darling, I love you!"

The sun seemed intolerably hot. He was half-blinded by the light, which was reflected by the tears in his eyes. He walked over the parched earth, conscious of the wetness running down his face, and sat on the old garden bench, the one with the support broken in its back. He took out his handkerchief, and rubbed savagely at his eyes, but he was unable to suppress the sobs he was making. The bush, whose branches he had just pushed through, was now black and small, and the luxuriant foliage had totally disappeared. Now he could see past it into the arbour. Now there was nothing but soil covered by patches of weed.

He dried his eyes and looked up at the house. No longer charged with significance, it appeared to him as it had when he had arrived.

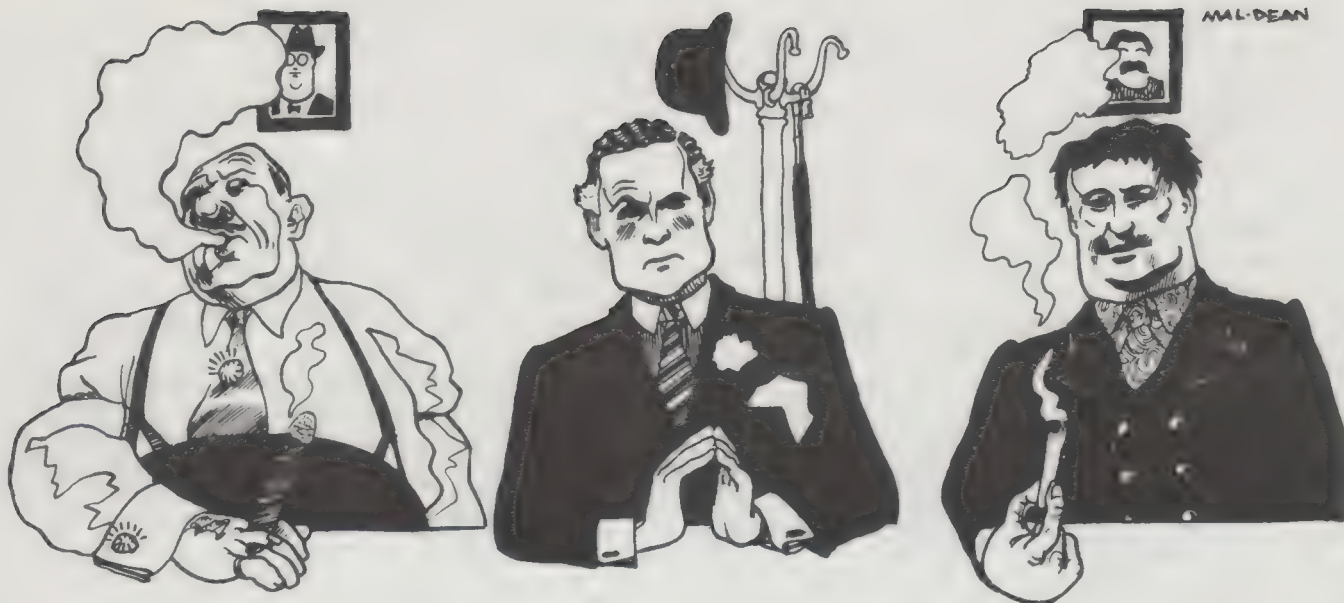
There was a bird singing nearby.

His mind was a maze, but he knew that one day he would have to piece together all the complex implications of what had happened. Now, he could only mourn, as he had mourned her once before.

Had she known, at the end? As she lay dying, and watched her second son growing older and gradually taking on the appearance of her brief lover, did she think it was a matter of coincidence, and nothing else?

He began weeping again, his body shaking on the bench. Life now, after this day, seemed to be intolerable. But he would have to live. Soon he would leave, and go back to his home in London. If he ever came this way again he would be driving in a car or a coach, along the road over the place where the house had been. And perhaps he would not know its exact location, and would not be able to sense just when the wheels of the vehicle would be running above the site of this house and this garden. And perhaps he would not care; perhaps the hold that the house, his past, his family, and his lover had over him would, from now on, be broken forever.

But even as he thought this, he knew that it was the opposite of the truth. ■



NORMAN SPINRAD:

THE LAST HURRAH OF THE GOLDEN HORDE

EASTWARD ACROSS THE Gobi, three hundred old men ride upon three hundred shaggy, wizened Mongolian ponies. The ponies, like their riders, are the tag-end of a dying breed. The men are dressed in filthy, cracked, badly-tanned leathers. Across their backs are strapped short Mongolian bows; swords dangle from their waists and they carry lances in their horny hands as they ride toward the sunrise.

In the dingy storefront on Sullivan Street identified as the D'Mato Social Club by the peeling green letters on the fly-specked translucent area above the black-painted area of the plate glass window that hid the cave-like interior from the view of casual assassins in the street, Jerry Cornelius, a not-so-casual (or in his own way a *more* casual) assassin, sat on a gray-enamelled metal folding chair facing a gnarled old man with a Jimmy Durante nose across the cracked surface of a rickety card-table. Jerry wore a carefully-dated black suit, a black silk shirt, a white tie, and white boots. His black vinyl raincoat was draped across a counter which paralleled one wall of the room and which held a display of candy bars and a cardboard showcase of De Nobili cigars.

Behind the counter hung a faded photograph of Franklin D. Roosevelt framed in black. The man with the Jimmy Durante nose was smoking a De Nobili and the semi-poisonous smoke that he blew across the table was clearly designed to blow Jerry's cool. Jerry, however, had expected this, and as a counter-measure kept his violin case close at hand. It seemed a draw.

"This is a big one, Cornelius," the old man said.

"Flesh is flesh, Mr Siciliano," Jerry replied. "Metal is metal."

"Have you ever hit a Cabinet-level official before?"

Jerry pondered. "It's open to doubt," he finally admitted. "I got a head of state once, but it was a benevolent despotism."

The old man chewed his cigar, much to Jerry's disgust. "It'll have to do," he said. "You've got the contract. How soon can you be in Sinkiang?"

"Three days. I'll have to change passports again."

"Make it two."

"I'd have to pull strings. It'll cost you."

The old man shrugged. "Do it," he said.

Jerry grinned. "My motto, Mr Siciliano. Who's the

contract on?"

"Mao Tze Tung's heir-apparent."

"Who's that these days?" Jerry asked. The situation in China had gotten somewhat muddled.

"That's your problem," Durante-nose said.

Jerry shrugged. "And my cover?"

"Arrange it yourself."

Jerry got up clutching his violin case, ran his hand through his great bush of blonde natural, retrieved his raincoat, took a De Nobile from the counter, and said with an evil smirk: "Don't say I didn't warn you."

The railroad train consisted of a locomotive, a sealed boxcar, three flatcars and a caboose. The boxcar contained one ton of (uncut?) heroin. The open flatcars held three hundred members of the People's Army of China armed with machineguns, protected from the elements by the thought of Chairman Mao. The caboose held the negotiating team. The locomotive was a diesel job.

"You'll be working with the Russians on this, Inspector Cornelius," Q said. "Our interests happen to coincide."

Jerry frowned. The last time he had worked with a Russian, he had contracted the clap. "I don't trust those buggers," he told Q.

"Neither do we," Q said crisply, "but it's the only way we can get you into Sinkiang. You leave for Moscow on Aeroflot in the morning."

"Aeroflot?" whined Jerry. Christ, those Russian stewardesses! he thought. "I get airsick on Aeroflot," he complained.

Q glared at Jerry firmly. "We're getting the family plan discount," he explained.

"But I'm flying alone. . . ."

"Precisely."

"Dramamine?"

"If you insist," Q said primly. "But the Bureau frowns on foreign substances."

"My mission?" Jerry asked.

"Catch the Chinks and the Maf in the act. Bust them."

"But we have no jurisdiction."

"Hence the Russians," said Q. "Use your head, Cornelius."

"They have no jurisdiction either."

"You're not that naive, Cornelius."

"I suppose not," Jerry said wistfully.

According to the thought of Chairman Mao, the village was an anachronism: one hundred and fifty-three flea-bitten nomads, along with their animals (mostly diseased horses and threadbare yaks) encamped in a cluster of leather yurts on the margin of the Gobi. From the correct point of view, the village might be said not to exist.

From this same point of view (as well as from several others) the three hundred old men who galloped in from the wastes of the Gobi might also be said to be non-existent. Nevertheless, the nomad encampment had a certain reality for the old warriors; in fact an archetypal

reality stretching back in a line of unbroken tradition from the days of the Great Khan and his Golden Horde still burning clearly in their ancestral memory to the misty and arthritic present.

Village. Burn. Pillage. Rape. Kill.

Outside the umbrella of the thoughts of Chairman Mao, the old barbarians existed in a happier reality of simple, straightforward traditional imperatives.

Therefore, unmindful of the fact that the village was an anachronism, the old warriors, in the time-honored tradition of the Golden Horde, rode into the encampment, slew the men and children, made a pass at raping the women to death, slaughtered the animals, burned the yurts, and continued to ride eastward, secure in the knowledge that they had fulfilled another quantum of their timeless destiny.

A long concrete runway broke the monotony of the Sinkiang wastelands with the more absolute monotony of its geometric perfection. At right angles to the runway, a railroad spur wandered off toward the horizon. From the viewpoint of the pilot of the C-5A approaching this three-dimensional nexus, the runway and the railroad spur formed a T with a finite bar and an infinite upright. If anything, the pilot thought this sloppy. It is likely that he did not fully comprehend the thought of Chairman Mao; a more erudite man might have appreciated the symbolism.

"It is a clear demonstration of the cynical perfidy of the Chinese gangster element enshrined behind the facade of the Maoist clique, Comrade Cornelius," Commissar Krapotkin observed genially, drawing a glass of tea from the silver samovar and handing it across the table to Jerry. Krapotkin was a short barrel of a man who wore his double-breasted Mod suit like a uniform. Perhaps it is a uniform, Jerry thought, as he took a spiked sugar-cube out of his mother-of-pearl pillbox and inserted it between his teeth. The Russians were doing their best to be hip these days and it was hard to keep up.

As Jerry sipped tea through the sugar-cube between his teeth, Krapotkin lit up an Acapulco Gold and continued to make small-talk: "While they gibber and squeak their anti-Soviet obscenities in Peking, they deal with the worst gangster element of the decadent capitalist society by their back door in Sinkiang, which, by the way, is of course rightfully Soviet territory."

"I wouldn't call the Maf the *worst* gangster element of decadent capitalist society," Jerry observed mildly.

Krapotkin produced a metallic sound which Jerry tentatively identified as a laugh. "Ah, very good, Comrade Cornelius. Indeed, one might argue that the distribution of heroin, contributing as it does to the further corruption of the already decadent West, is an act which contributes to the long range progress of the working-class."

"But providing the reactionary adventurist regime in Peking with hard American currency does not," Jerry rejoined.

"Exactly, Comrade! Which is why my government has decided to cooperate with the American narcs. Once the

Maoist clique has been exposed in the act of selling heroin to the Maf, we should have no trouble totally discrediting them with progressive elements throughout the world.”

“And of course the Mafia will be discredited as well.”
“?”

“The Maf is essentially a patriotic organisation like the K.K.K. or the Loyal Order of Moose.”

Krapotkin roached his joint. “Enough of the pleasantries, Comrade,” he said. “Are you prepared for the drop?”

Jerry fingered his violin case. “My cover?” he inquired.

“You will be a Mafia hit man assigned a contract on the heir-apparent to Mao Tze Tung,” Krapotkin said. “Our agents in Palermo have uncovered just such a plot.”

“The real hit man?”

Krapotkin smiled. “He has been disposed of, I assure you.”

From a certain viewpoint, Jerry reflected, Krapotkin was right.

Not 90 seconds after the C-5A had taxied to a halt with its tail facing the juncture of the rail-spur-runway T as if preparing to fart along the track, the great doors in the nose opened like the petals of an aluminium flower, a ramp was lowered, and a black Cadillac disgorged, pulling a house trailer of grandiose proportions and Miami-Beach-Gothic design. The C-5A continued to disgorge Cadillacs like a pregnant guppy, each one pulling a trailer larger and more rococo than the last.

Something less than three hundred old men galloped haltingly across the wastes of Sinkiang on faltering ponies. A dozen or more of the Mongol warriors had burst blood vessels in their tired old brains from the excitement of the last massacre. The blood was running thin. Where once the steppes had echoed to the pounding hooves of the Golden Horde as the whole world trembled before a tide of barbarians that filled the field of vision from horizon to horizon, now there was naught but an expiring handful of decrepit savages. *Sic transit gloria mundi*. The spirit was willing, but the flesh was practically moribund. The survivors envied those few of their comrades lucky enough to have died a warrior’s death sacking the last village in an endless chain reaching back to the glory days when the villages had names like Peking and Samarkand and Damascus.

But something—call it pride or manly virtue—kept the pitiful remnant of the Horde going, riding ever eastward into the sunrise. Perhaps it was the hope that somewhere on the endless steppe there still remained a village large enough (but not *too* large) to bring them all the glory of death in one last gory, triumphant, final massacre. Flailing like tattered battle flags in their befuddled old brains the simple imperatives which shaped their lives and hopes and destinies: Village. Burn. Pillage. Rape. Kill.

Jerry Cornelius, still clutching the violin case, stood alone in the gray wasteland, and watched the Russian

helicopter disappear into the slate-colored sky with a certain sense of foreboding. You just can’t trust those Russians, he thought. Now where was the car?

To the east was a large boulder. Behind it, and not without a certain sense of relief, Jerry found a late model black Cadillac sedan, well-waxed and shiny. So far, so good.

Inside the car, Jerry found his new persons. Doffing his clothes, he assumed the persona: a black pin-striped suit with pegged pants and thin lapels, a white button-down shirt, a white tie, a diamond stickpin, pointed black Italian loafers, argyl socks, a box of De Nobiles, and jars of black shoe polish and vaseline, with which he gave himself a Rudolph Valentino job, atop which he affixed a green porkpie hat with a leopard skin band. Thus accoutered, and with a round toothpick in his mouth at a jaunty angle, he sealed the car, turned on the air-conditioning, and set out across the wasteland.

Only when he discovered that the radio would bring in nothing but Radio Moscow and that the tape library contained naught but Tchaicowsky did the full extent of Krapotkin’s treachery become apparent.

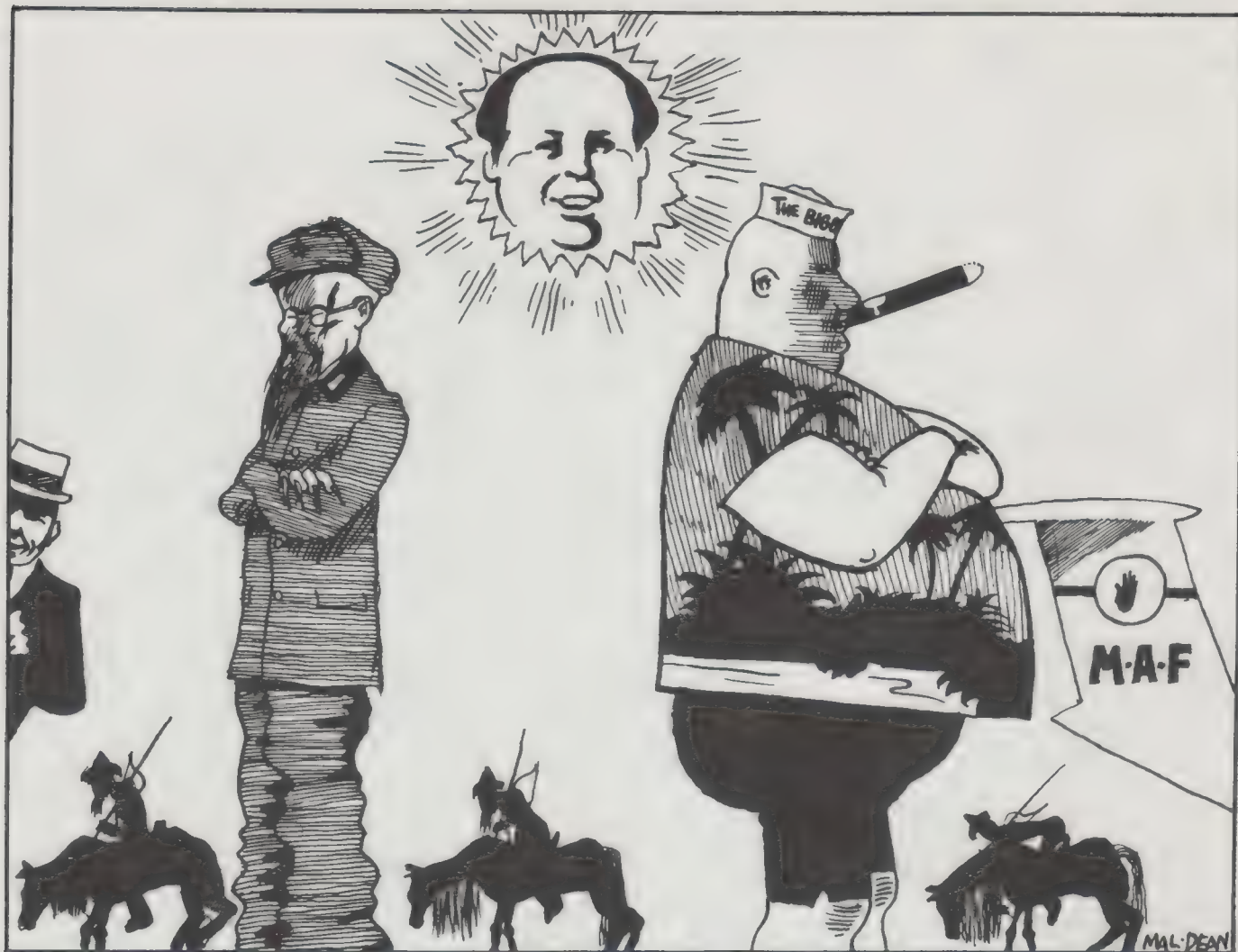
As the train hove into sight of the rail-spur-runway junction, the soldiers of the People’s Army were able to contain cries of awe, amazement and dismay only by diligent application of the thought of Chairman Mao.

For there in the depths of Sinkiang was, considering the circumstances, quite a decent facsimile of Las Vegas. A semi-circle of trailers rimmed a large kidney-shaped swimming pool. Done up in pastels, sporting picture windows, and sprouting numerous extensions, wings, and breezeways, the trailers resembled the lower or casino floors of Las Vegas hotels. Complex mazes of cabanas, beach chairs, bocci courts, pavillions, greenhouses, handball courts and pidgeon coups which filled the interstices between the trailers completed the illusion. Behind the semicircular Las Vegas facade towered the tail of the C-5A, reminiscent, somehow, of Howard Hughes and all that his shadowy persona implied. Parked among the spectral casino hotels were an indeterminant number of black Cadillacs.

Around the pool, waiters in red tuxedos served tepid Collinses to fat men in sunglasses stretched out in beach chairs, warming themselves with complex arrays of sun-lamps. Starlets in bikinis paraded their pinchable asses by the poolside.

The officials in the caboose immediately called for the reserve train which had been parked fifty miles down the track in anticipation of such a necessity.

Approaching his destination from the south, Jerry Cornelius spotted a cluster of pagodas, huts and barracks, among which huge billboards had been erected bearing immense portraits of Mao, Lenin, Stalin, Enver Hoxha, and other popular personalities of the People’s Republic of China. Everything was festooned with calligraphy like a wedding cake. Intermittent strings of firecrackers exploded. Hatchet men chased each other through the winding streets. Soldiers of the People’s Army performed calisthenics. The sharp syllables of Chinese dialects filled the air like



razorblades. Gongs sounded. Paper dragons danced in the streets. Perpetual twilight hovered over the scene, which, upon closer inspection, proved to be constructed of balsa wood, rice paper and paper mache.

Warily, Jerry swung the Cadillac wide of this Chinese version of Disneyland and circled toward the tail of a C-5A which dominated the landscape. Soon reality (such as it was) changed and he found himself on the outskirts of what appeared to be a suburb of Las Vegas: the lower stories of casino hotels mounted on wheels and parked in a semi-circle around a huge kidney-shaped pool, facing the Chinese apparition across the chlorinated waters.

Having spied a heavily-guarded boxcar behind the facade of the Chinese reality, Jerry was not surprised to see a dozen thugs with machineguns guarding the C-5A. The \$50,000,000 must be on the plane.

For a moment, Jerry parked the Cad along the Orient-Vegas interface, playing at pondering his next move.

Shortly, he drove on into the Mafia camp, parked the Cadillac next to a fire hydrant outside a barbershop, and melted into the scene with barely a ripple. Yes indeed, this was his kind of town!

Eastward across the wastelands, here and there a rider dead on his horse, a scungy pony faltering under its rider, the spirit burning brighter as the blood thinned as if their

ancient flesh were ectoplasmating into naught but the weathered parchment-dry quintessence of tradition-cum-desire, the desperate determination not to die a peasant's death, the image of the Final Massacre burning its forelorn hope into the backs of what was left of their arteriosclerotic brains, the husks of the Golden Horde doddered onward, ever onward.

"Ya get da Big Picture, Cornelius?" The Rock said, sipping at his Collins as he and Jerry lay side by side in beach chairs, sunning themselves at poolside. Jerry, dressed in neon-blue bathing suit, contrasting yellow terrycloth robe, Japanese rubber sandals and silvered Air Force shades, had resisted the dangerous urge to order Pernod, and as a consequence was nursing a foul rum concoction. Only the presence of his violin case close at hand soothed his jangled nerves. And the sunlamps threatened to melt the shoepolish in his hair.

"I'm not paid to get the Big Picture, Rock," Jerry said, keeping in character, though from a certain viewpoint what he was saying was true.

The Rock scratched his hairy paunch with one hand and with the other, clawlike, pinched the ass of a passing starlet, who giggled appropriately.

"I like yer style, kid," the Rock said. "But doncha have any curiosity?"

"Curiosity killed a cat."

"I'm a dog man myself, Cornelius, so who gives a shit? What I say is dese Chinks have been asking for it. Just because da punks got a few H-bombs and ICBMs is no reason for them to get the idea they can burn the Maf and live ta talk about it. Yeah, after ya hit their number two *padron*, that smart-ass punk in Peking will have ta look over his shoulder a few times before he tries putting milk-sugar in our heroin again."

"Just who is their number two?"

Rock pointed his De Nobili at the empty raft anchored out in the center of the kidney-shaped pool. "Da Big Boy will make this year's deal out on da raft—neutral turf. Whatever Chink is out there with him—zap!"

"Won't the Reds . . . ?" Jerry inquired.

"Da Cads are full of heavies with choppers," The Rock grinned. "When you hit da number two, dey hit da People's Army." The Rock chucked himself under the chin with his right forefinger as if flicking a bead of sweat at the giant posters of Mao, Stalin, Hoxha and Lenin glowering like spectral Internal Revenue agents across the moat-waters of the pool.

Jerry decided to develop a sudden hankering for Egg Foo Yung.

Major Sung passed the opium pipe across the black-lacquered table to Jerry, who inhaled the sweet smoke and fingered his violin case voluptuously as Major Sung caressed his copy of the Little Red Book obscenely and said: "Of course I am familiar with your work in England, Colonel Kor Ne Loos."

"Your English is excellent, Major," Jerry lied. "Harvard?"

"Berlitz."

"I should be reporting to the honorable Heir-Apparent to godlike Mao," Jerry chided.

Major Sung frowned and kicked the brass gong which sat upon the table. Kung-fu, Jerry noted warily. He revised his estimate of Major Sung laterally. "As you of course know," Sung said with an oriental leer, "the peacock often hides his egg behind an embroidered fan."

Jerry started—he certainly hadn't expected anything like this! "The dragon has been known to preen his scales before he pounces," he rejoined.

Outside the pagoda, a chorus of two hundred kindergarten students were chanting the latest Number One on the Chinese Top 40, "Death To The Violators Of The Spirit Of Mao's Urine." Jerry tapped his fingers on the table in time to the catchy rhythm, which he recognized as a variation on "Rock Around The Clock."

"May I take that to imply that the pasta contains an asp?" Major Sung said. It was clearly not a question.

Jerry smiled. "As Confucius says, a fox with a dagger may behead a drunken lion."

Major Sung laughed. "As Chairman Mao has observed, the enemies of the Revolution will devour their own entrails if they can make a fast buck in the process."

Bowing and scraping, a Sergeant in a kimono entered the chamber with tea and fortune cookies.

Major Sung cracked open his pastry and read aloud:

"Death to the revisionist running dogs of the Wall Street imperialists and their would-be lackies in Prague."

Jerry's fortune cookie said: "Tension, apprehension and dissension have begun."

As Jerry, in his pin-stripe suit, porkpie hat, and Italian loafers, lounged against the right front fender of the Cadillac, which he had parked inconspicuously at poolside, a fat man in a flowered Hawaiian shirt and black Bermuda shorts boarded a speedboat at the Vegas end of the pool. Stuffed between his thick lips was an El Ropo Supremo Perfecto Grande. Set jauntily on his bald head was a red sailor cap on the brim of which "The Big Boy" had been embroidered in Atlantic City in bold blue thread.

As a Meyer Davis orchestra in one of the poolside cabanas struck up "Amore" and a stripper began to peel on the diving board, the white speedboat set out across the pool toward the raft.

Meanwhile across the pool, fifty soldiers of the People's Army marched back and forth bearing placards serializing the menu of Hong Fat's restaurant in severe calligraphy and psychedelic posters of Mao, Stalin, Lenin and Jim Morrison while the People's Army Brass Band played "Chinatown, My Chinatown" to which a chorus of Red Guards waving the Little Red Book sung the "Internationale" in Sinosized Albanian. To this heady send-off, an old bearded Chinese in a military tunic (with a curious if superficial resemblance to Ho Chi Minh) rowed a punt toward the raft in neutral waters.

At poolside, Jerry's trained eye picked out heavies in blue serge suits moving unobtrusively toward their Cadillacs. They all carried violin cases. Jerry placed a bet with a convenient bookie that the cases did not contain violins. The best he could get was the wrong end of 9-4 odds.

Alone on the raft at last, The Big Boy and the Heir-Apparent swapped bon mots as the strains of "High Hopes" mingled with the thin voices of schoolchildren chanting "My Mao Can Lick Your Mao" in a corrupt Canton dialect.

"Ya dirty mother, last year's dope was cut with milk-sugar."

"As Chairman Mao has observed, when dealing with corrupt mercenaries of the exploitative class, the doctrine of 'no tickie, no washee' is fully justified."

"Remember what happened to Bugsy Siegal!"

"Confucius once said that a toothless dragon does not fear the orthodontist."

Behind the Chinese Disneyland, the People's Army had placed six machinegun nests in a circle around the boxcar of heroin.

Twenty heavies with choppers ringed the C-5A. Inside, five more heavies guarded \$50,000,000 in unmarked small bills.

"Fifty million! That's robbery. You Chinks are crooks."

The Meyer Davis orchestra played "It Takes Two To Tango." The People's Army Brass Band countered with a Chinese version of "Die Fahne Hoch."

"As Chairman Mao has said," the Heir-Apparent threatened, "I may not be the best man in town, but I'll be the best till the best comes round."

Hidden behind a facade of placards, posters, pagodas, dancing paper dragons, hatchet men, schoolchildren performing calisthenics, rioting Red Guards, captured American airmen in chains, opium dens and filthy peasant huts, three hundred soldiers of the People's Army of the People's Republic of China girded themselves for a human wave attack.

"We only deal with you Commie pinko Chink bastards because you're the only mass suppliers of heroin aside from the Federal narcs that we can find."

"As Chairman Mao has said, tough shit."

Ominously, the Meyer Davis orchestra began playing "Hawaiian War Chant."

Jerry Cornelius stubbed out his roach and reached for his violin case. "The time has come, the Walrus said, to speak of many things," he observed as, out on the raft, The Big Boy gave the finger to the Heir-Apparent.

"Fifty million for the boxcar, take it or leave it," the Heir-Apparent said.

The People's Army Brass Band broke into "Light My Fire" as seven hundred Red Guards doused themselves with gasoline and immolated themselves while singing "Chairman Mao ist unser Fuehrer" contrapuntally, but since they were all off-key, the ploy was a failure.

"As Al Capone once observed, play ball, or we lean on you."

Jerry Cornelius opened his violin case and withdrew a violin. To the untrained observer, it appeared to be merely an ordinary electric violin with self-contained power supply, built-in amp and speaker rated at 100 watts. However, an Underground electronics expert on 150 mg of methedrene had made a significant modification: the high notes registered well into the ultrasonic and the lows were deep down in the subsonic, while all audible frequencies were eliminated.

When Jerry tucked the violin under his chin and began to play "Wipeout," the brains of everyone within a five mile radius began to vibrate to the beat of a drummer who was ultra-and-supersonic as well as different and non-existent. To the naked human ear, Jerry appeared to be playing "The Sounds of Silence."

Out on the raft, The Big Boy was growing quite cross as the subliminal strains of "Wipeout" inflamed cells deep within his parietic brain. "Mao Tze Tung eats shit!" he informed the Heir-Apparent.

"Al Capone was a faggot, according to the infallible thought of Mao Tze Tung!"

The Meyer Davis orchestra began to play "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

The People's Army Brass Band immolated their tuba-player.

As Jerry segued into a subliminal rendition of "Heart-break Hotel," fifty slot machines produced spontaneous jackpots, Cadillacs gunned their engines, whores' poodles howled, thirteen plate glass windows shattered, and every starlet at poolside achieved climax. (Some of them had not come since their first screentests.)

Hatchet men began chopping at paper mache pagodas. A paper dragon set itself on fire. Three hundred soldiers preparing themselves for a human wave attack began to drool and got erections. Seven hundred chanting kindergarten children achieved satori and began to devour an American flag drenched with soy sauce. A giant poster of Stalin broke into a grin and thumbed its nose at a poster of Mao.

"Mao Tze Tung eats the hairy canary!"

"The Maf sucks!"

"Faggot!"

"Creep!"

"Chink!"

"Wop!"

"ARGH!"

Salivating, The Big Boy leapt at the Heir-Apparent, chomping his El Ropo Supremo Perfecto Grande to bits, and buried teeth and cigar in the old Chinaman's beard, setting it aflame. The two men wrestled on the raft, biting, spitting and cursing for a few moments, then toppled each other into the pool, which proved to be filled with crocodiles.

Pleased with his work, Jerry Cornelius began to play "Fire".

A phalanx of Cadillacs screamed around the pool and barreled into the People's Army Brass Band spewing machinegun bullets which ripped into a poster of Mao Tze Tung, enraging a rioting mob of Red Guards who set themselves on fire and threw themselves under the wheels of the cars, causing them to skid into a balsa wood pagoda which toppled into the pool in splinters which were devoured by the blood-crazed crocodiles who expired in agony from the splinters in their stomachs some time later.



Three hundred soldiers of the People's Army launched a human wave attack, firing their machineguns at random.

Jerry continued to play "Fire", seeing no particular reason to change the tune.

Major Sung shrieked: "Capitalistic running dogs of the demographic People's revisionist lackies of Elvis Presley have over-run the ideological manifestations of decadent elements within the amplifier of the pagoda!" and committed hara-kiri.

The Rock began smashing slot machines with a baseball bat.

Starlets tore off their bikinis and chased terrified hatchet men around the poolside.

The human wave reached the pool, dove in, and proceeded to beat moribund crocodiles to death with their gunbutts.

A suicide squad hurled itself through the plate glass window of a trailer and devoured the rug.

Cadillacs circled the boxcar of heroin like hostile Indians, filling the air with hot lead.

The sopping remnants of the human wave reached the trailer camp and began beating thugs to death with dead crocodiles.

Red Guards showered the C-5A with ink bottles.

Tongues of flame were everywhere.

Explosions, contusions, fire, gore, curses, looting, rape.

Jerry Cornelius began playing "All You Need Is Love," knowing that no one was listening.

Riding eastward across the wastelands on their diseased

ponies, something under two hundred decrepit remnants of what once had been the glorious Golden Horde, most of them incoherent with exhaustion, spied a great conflagration on the horizon.

Flaccid adrenals urged near-moribund hearts to beat faster. They flayed their ponies with the shafts of their spears. Drool flecked the lips of doddards and ponies alike. Their backbrains smelled blood and fire in the air.

The smells of gunpowder, gasoline, burning balsa wood and paper mache, sizzling flesh, gave Jerry Cornelius a slight buzz as he began to play "Deck the Halls With Boughs of Holly". The swimming pool was colored a bright carnelian, which did little to mask the chlorine odor. Bits of anodized aluminum struggled to keep afloat amid scraps of charred balsa wood and shards of placards.

A dented Cadillac careened through a barricade of beach chairs and into a squad of Chinese soldiers beating a starlet to death with copies of the Little Red Book before sliding over the rim of the pool to sink bubbling into the churning depths.

The pillar of fire consuming the Chinese Disneyland reminded Jerry of the Dresden firestorm. Sentimentally, he began to play "Bongo, Bongo, Bongo, I Don't Want To Leave The Congo."

In a strange display of gallantry, Red Guards, hit men, capa mafiosas and Chinese soldiers joined hands in a ring around the ruined trailer camp, screaming "Burn, baby, burn!" in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Italian Pidgeon, and Yiddish. At each "burn" a canister of napalm dropped from somewhere onto the conflagration.

Reduced to sentimentality despite himself, Jerry played "God Save The Queen."

Two hundred or so pairs of rheumy eyes lit up with feral joy at the sight of a great city (by current Horde standards anyway) going up in flames, at the sight of smashed cars, broken bodies, naked starlets shrieking, and a great pool of what appeared to be blood.

Weeping great nostalgic tears, the last generation of the Golden Horde shouldered their spears, whipped their ponies into a stumbling gallop and charged in a body into the fray, the image of the Final Massacre burning like a city in the fevered brains of the aged savages:

Village! Burn! Pillage! Rape! Kill!

Mongolian ponies wheezing and gasping under them, the crazed doddards reached the conflagration and found to their chagrin that there was precious little unburnt, unpillaged, unraped, unkill.

They found a boxcar guarded by machinegunners and charged it en masse, sacrificing half their number to impale the befuddled Chinese troops on their spears and set the boxcar aflame. As a strangely-intoxicating aromatic smoke billowed from the burning boxcar, the remnant of the remnant scattered, looking for more things or people to burn, rape, and kill.

A dozen of the doddards expired attempting to rape an aged whore to death, and another dozen were compelled to shamefacedly trample her to death under the hooves of

their ponies, eight of which expired from the effort.

Fifteen of the Horde had heart attacks trying to beat Cadillacs to death.

A half-dozen doddards died of broken hearts when the slot machines they were torturing failed to cry out in pain.

Several of the Horde fell to devouring the corpses of crocodiles and choked to death on the splinters.

As the last Khan of the Golden Horde watched in senile befuddlement, the great silver bird issued a terrible battle-cry and began to move. The doddard's bleary eyes bugged as the C-5A picked up speed, shot by him, and actually left the ground!

A feeble nervous impulse travelled spastically from his optic nerve into his brain, and thence to his arm and throat.

"Kill!" he wheezed asthmatically, and hurled his spear at the unnatural thing.

The spear was sucked into the intake of the left inboard jet engine, lodged in the turbine, and shattered it. The jet engine exploded, shearing off the wing. The C-5A nearly completed a loop before it crashed upside-down to the runway and exploded into flames.

From an aerial viewpoint, the runway and the railroad spur formed a T with a finite bar and an infinite upright, but the only living being in the area did not notice the symbolism. Riding into the sunset on his pony, his back to what in the distance seemed naught but a smoldering refuse-heap, the last Khan of the Golden Horde, sole survivor of the Final Massacre, filled his dying brain with one thought, like a dwindling chord: fulfillment; Golden Horde died in glory; village; burned; pillaged; raped; killed; ancestors proud.

This thought flared brightly in his brain like a dying ember and then he went to that Great Carnage Heap in the Sky. The wheezing pony tripped over a rock, dislodging the body, which fell to the ground in a twisted heap. A vulture descended, pecked at the body, sniffed, and departed.

The pony staggered on for a few steps, then halted, its dim brain perhaps mesmerized by the glare of the setting sun.

THE MONGOLIAN PONY was still standing there an hour later when Jerry Cornelius, in his pin-stripe suit, porkpie hat, and Italian loafers, wandered dazedly up to it out of the wasteland.

"Here's a bit of luck," Jerry muttered, perking up a bit. (The short-circuiting of his electric violin had seriously vexed him.)

Jerry mounted the pony, kneed its flanks and shouted: "Git 'em up, Scout!"

The pony waddled forward a few steps, puked, and died.

Jerry extricated himself from the corpse, brushed himself off, and consulted a fortune cookie he had secreted in a pocket.

"It's a long way to Tipperary," the fortune cookie informed him.

Munching the soggy rice pastry, Jerry trudged off into the setting sun whistling "Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones, now hear de word of de Lord. . . ." ■

Graham Charnock:

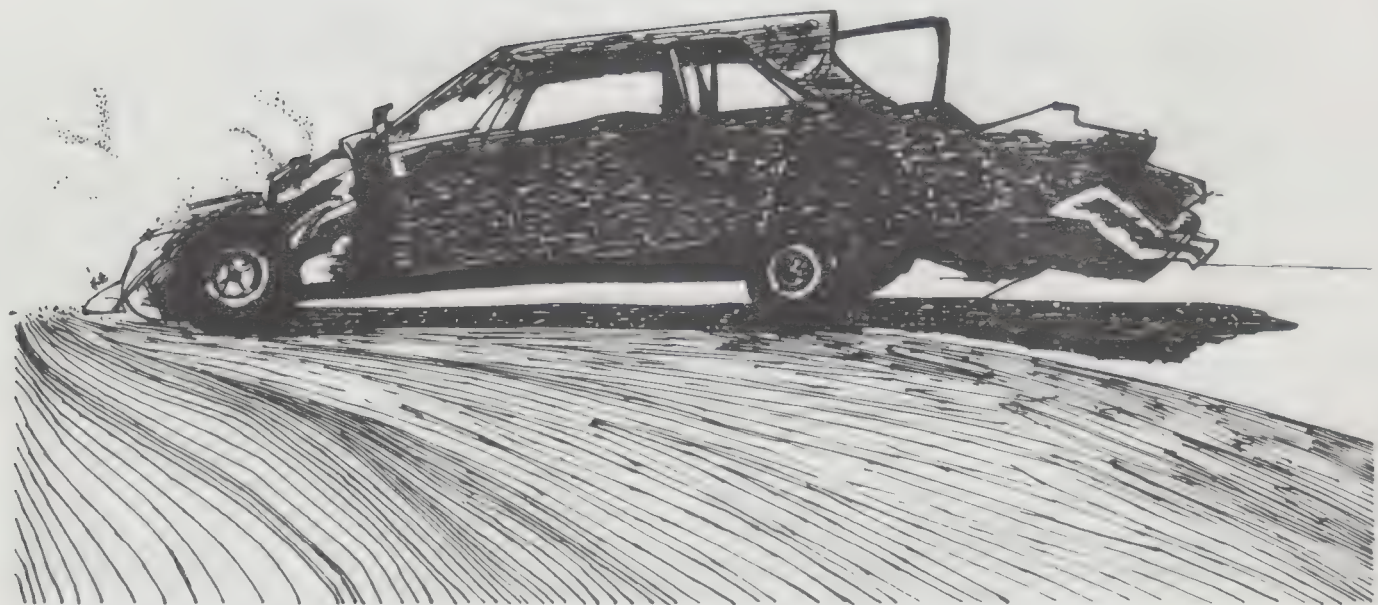
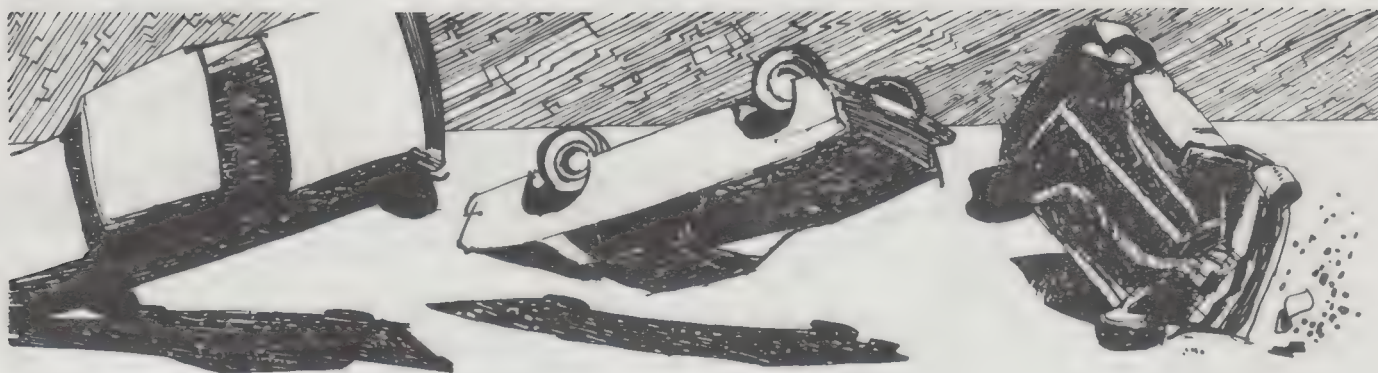
THE EROGENOUS ZONE

... usually where skin and mucous membrane meet the body...

Heading for Media Assault Limited's Co-ordination Centre—the rebuilt Shell Centre by the river with one wing demolished and left in symbolic ruins, a hive of rubble overgrown with picturesque creepers—Craven Image detoured to drive through the grey slum area scheduled for saturation bombing in that afternoon's exercise. A purple Morning Mist was afloat in the streets, however, and he could make out little. He wondered if the Mist was part of the M.A.L. deal and, if so, what it signified. He hadn't seen it posted in that morning's Newsfax, but that didn't mean a great deal. It might be simply Rogue, trailed about by unforeseen eddies in the microclimate of this sector of the city.

Bored for the moment and driving on Automatic, he juggled stations, hunting the airwaves, breathing canned air, the miasma sealed out. One day, he thought as the radio howled, they will beat the static problem. The dream: an anti-static advertising medium. One day the airwaves will be beautifully clear, like two crystal glasses kissing in a toast and floating out a note: *sostenuto*. But for now the crackle of the voices of the Gods (some celebration, he decided, of the death of Albert Schweitzer). And the St. Elmo's fire prowling on the prow of the automobile.

He relaxed, cocooned, when out of the gloom stepped a kid, an idiot with hydrocephalic forehead and glazed eyes. A Leech trailed from his neck and his lips were moving with the jingle that was in his blood. This one was FRASSOW (Federation of Registered Anti-Semitic Societies of the West). Craven could tell by the abrupt exhortatory phrasings, the dead giveaway of the rictus lip movements. KKK, for instance, was more poetic; its alliterative slogans had their own quite unmistakable pattern.



The kid was too close for the Automatic to cope with. It gave a token kick at the steering and the car did a little jig, dancing at the wake. Still singing the kid was scooped up by the fender and carried along the nearside wing. His face

swung close to the window and then bounced away as his body was levered up and torn free like the lid of a tin can to slide and scrape across the roof.

A red warning light flickered. The Automatic, unnerved

by the incident, flipped entirely and withdrew. Craven grabbed the wheel and searched in a clammy sweat for the brake. He swore. *Damn my feet—how long is it since I've driven—I mean really driven?*

He laid his flesh against the machine's and waited for the natural rhythms to take over, but no luck. His luck was a car turning from an intersection, offering its flank to him. They ground and groped and interlocked. His seal-out went as they rolled to a halt and he grabbed an emergency filter but not before a quick flash of the two cars as elephants, painted with lurid designs, tusk-wrestling.

They descended from their howdahs and faced each other, Craven Image and this stranger, whose turban metamorphosed into silky-cut milk-white hair. He was a big guy, and old, and the colour of his hair was echoed in the colour of his skin, where it showed beneath his tight, sharkskin suit. This man was craggy portland stone; a judge maybe with a hand, fleeced with fine white hairs, that could crack two heads against each other, in its palm, like walnuts. No, on reflection, not a judge. A cop on his day off, or perhaps a social worker.

He looked at Craven, muttered something indistinguishable, and went around the car to force shut the bonnet which had sprung open with the impact, like the floating upper of a clown's shoe. The fatal wound, however, was in the side of his car, beautiful and clean like an appendectomy on a young girl. Craven ran his hand along the split side and it snagged on a skew of metal and came away bloody, the thumb torn for practically its entire length. The blood was beautiful too, and the stranger seemed attracted. He took a handkerchief from his pocket and bound up the member.

"Come with me," he said and turned and walked off so that Craven could only follow him.

They climbed up on the kerb, breaking suddenly free of the wall of Mist, and along for a few blocks until a huge building reared up, a part of the old city the bulldozers had never found, towering over the single-storey slum units. Perhaps, Craven speculated, it had been secret and safe in some time-warp when they tore down the old Station House and Barney's Liquor Store, that other renowned and now-mourned local monument.

"It used to be St. Mary's Hospital," said his milky-haired friend. "But now we just call it the National."

"From the sacred to the secular in one easy movement," said Craven, and with an easy movement they went inside.

There was a large reception hall. It was deserted. Deserted corridors ranged on either side. The milky-haired man went to the front-desk, a counter with a shoebox office tucked behind. He banged a fist and peered over the counter.

"This is a Poor hospital," he told Craven. "We have to rely on voluntary labour. You wait here and I'll rustle somebody up. We don't have to go through the business of registering you, but somebody should take a look at that thumb, maybe put a few stitches in it. I'd do it myself but officially I'm out on call."

He strode off down a corridor, occasionally trying a door, and disappeared from sight. Craven lifted up a hinged flap in the counter and explored the small office. It was unremarkable. On one wall, hidden from the view of anyone in the reception hall there was, improbably, a girlie calendar. All the date leaves had been torn off and the colour photograph was all faded oiled gooseflesh. The calendar was several years old.

The blood had caked on Craven's thumb and it was

beginning to ache. He wandered along one of the corridors and found a door marked: DISPENSARY. Inside a nurse was perched on a stool before a long, bare table, filling in a sheet on a clipboard.

In another part of the city A touches B's knee gently beneath the pine breakfast table.

"That's nice," she says. "You haven't done that for such a long time."

"Not since I was a brash and randy young man," says A. "And I seriously thought that was what was meant by touching girls up. An innocent hand on the stocking."

"You were never *that* innocent."

"Wasn't I?" It is not a rhetorical, even ironical question. It is not even a joke, or a light aside. B misses the twinkle in his eye. Without that twinkle he seems almost a stranger.

Is this age? thinks A. Is this maturity? When one forgets one's time of innocence, one's loss of innocence. When one is reconciled to the grey panorama of everyday guilt. The "everyday" is important, he thinks. He is not a religious man. This is not a religious guilt. This is a common-or-garden guilt one can wash off, like dirt, perhaps with sleep or perhaps a few minutes of real love, before sex or after sex, perhaps even during sex. But it begins to adhere again with the morning, and the following day. Most of the time one has to live with it, and for its part the guilt is as inoffensive as a film of smoke in the air. Most of the time.

"How is he this morning?" asks A. Now he cannot even bear to enter the room where her father lies, the curtains drawn in case the sunlight should shock him into death.

"Quiet."

"You're crying," he says. She has averted her head but not quickly enough to hide from him the moisture track on her cheek. She gets up to tend the automatic coffee percolator which has mercifully, and automatically, switched itself off.

"I mustn't forget how to cry," she says, as if it is a physical skill, a talent, that might lapse through lack of practice and a hardening of the muscles, the organs of grief. "It would be easy. He takes so long to die. If I can still cry it proves I still love him. Doesn't it?" she asks in a meek voice.

He goes to her and kisses her on the forehead and then on the lips. I always told her the truth, he thinks. It was always an article of faith, an endorsement of our marriage. So what's a lie? Would it hurt just to say yes, just this once? Wouldn't it be just another speck of everyday dirt he could wash off later with an easy act of love?

"Yes," he says, but qualifies the lie with a truth. "But it's not forgetting how to cry, but forgetting who you're crying for that you really have to worry about."

He lifts her sweater and slides his hands beneath but she pulls away and looks at the door to her father's room. "No. Please don't."

She smiles and properly wraps his arms about her, above the sweater, and they stand like that for a little while.

Die, A thinks, with his back to the door, holding the doll of the old man's daughter. *Die, fuck you. Die.*

"Hello," said the nurse. "You're new here aren't you?"

"I was looking for somebody. Anybody. The place seems deserted."

"It is. They're all out on call. We don't have many in-patients. It's a question of trying to establish trust. If the

people in this neighbourhood have any kind of faith it's certainly not a faith in medicine. You'll be Doctor . . ."

"My name's Craven. But I'm not . . .".

"My name's Hedy. It used to be Hetty but I couldn't stand that." Hedy climbed down from the stool. "When I was in show-business I called myself Gisella. Men told me it sounded erotic but I think it was only because none of them knew for sure how to pronounce it. They could graft their own erotic overtones onto it as it suited them. Do you know you have an intense magnetism?"

"You were an actress?" Craven asked. The dispensary looked bare and cold. The walls were shelved to the ceiling and half the shelves were empty. A draught tickled his neck from the open door and he pushed it shut with his heel.

"I used to be a strip-tease artiste," Hedy said. "Do you believe that?"

"Why not? You have the figure for it."

"Do you want to make love?" Hedy asked.

"Here?"

"Nobody will interrupt us. Undress me."

She wore a white blouse that zipped at the back. She lifted her hair free around the base of her neck as he slid the zip open.

"You wouldn't believe how long a stripper can remain a virgin if she really tries," said Hedy. "I was twenty-seven before I let a man take my clothes off. It was kind of funny at first but after a while I got a taste for it. After that, taking my own clothes off seemed passé. It was the beginning of the end, I guess."

"Of your virginity?"

"And of my career."

She was naked now. Surprisingly Craven felt no desire. He blamed it on the surroundings.

"So you took up nursing?"

"It took me up. I met this doctor who works here. His name's Howard. He drinks a bit and gets rather helpless. I found myself ministering to his patients, a real angel of mercy. I like it. I once did an appendix case after he got too upset to continue."

She took off his shirt. Craven could feel gooseflesh rising, but that was all. "That must have been difficult."

"Not really. I'd seen it done a few times."

She had finished undressing him, exposing his indifference. "Nothing?" she asked sadly.

He hated to disappoint her. "Give it time. It will come. Where shall we do it? On the table or on the floor?"

"The floor's dusty, and anyway these old buildings are infested with roaches."

"The table then." He lifted her up.

"I hope you'll enjoy it here."

The ambiguity of her words amused him. He felt a mild but hopeful flush of heat in his abdomen. She spread her legs and he climbed on top of her.

"I don't expect to be here long," he said. "It's only my thumb." He showed it to her. The wound had opened and a drop of blood fell onto her breast.

"My Christ, you're a patient!" she cried. "What do you think you're doing! Don't touch me!"

She screamed and the dispensary door opened. An intern stood in the doorway.

"Howard," Hedy shrieked. "He's a patient!" She struggled with Craven.

Until the moment the intern reached forward and grabbed him Craven had believed himself to be in the middle of some bizarre accident trauma, brought on by his whiff of Morning Mist. When the intern pulled him off the

table, he knew he wasn't. Craven's head hit the floor.

It is overcast and B has drawn back the curtains. A enters the room. More and more he is becoming obsessed with the idea of guilt. This is an act of penance, a secular pilgrimage. The old man looks up at him, eyes sunk in a death-bed pallor.

"How are you?" A asks before he can cut back the triteness of the question, but the old man, who has had time to consider it, knows the answer is silence. His hand stirs on the sheet in greeting.

"Is there anything I can get you?"

"I don't need anything now," the old man says. His voice is like a slow rasp, his words like wood filings, coarse and granular. "I've just been remembering. Lying here and remembering."

"What?"

"The Dresden bombing," the old man says. "It was wrong. We knew it at the time, but we went through with it. Wartime is the only time when two wrongs can make a right. War is terrible," he ends, and A relaxes, pleased the old man too can descend into triteness.

"Were you involved?"

"I was a gunner. I didn't drop the bombs. It's odd but it was incredibly peaceful. I was in a perspex bubble in the tail and all the noise seemed so distant. Even when I had to open fire it was as if I were firing into another world beyond the canopy. I felt safe. I was never afraid."

"Never?"

"Only on the ground, afterwards. Afraid of normal human things. Afraid of the drink and the companionship, afraid of the WAAFs and the WAACs and the girls at home when I got to go home. Afraid there wouldn't be enough, I guess, but there always was. I was an opportunist, I suppose, like all the others, cashing in on the emotional trauma of war, but I have no conscience about it. No, if I have a conscience about anything it's about the Jews."

"That was hardly our fault," says A. The diplomatic our.

"I don't mean what Hitler was doing. I mean what we did. We were never sympathetic to them, not even with all their troubles in Germany. I used to fly with one called Levin, a radio operator. Nobody liked him and we used to tease him silly about jerry having a special bullet for him and how it was a regular risk to fly in the same aircraft as him. On the face of it, it was all careless enough, boyish stuff. We were all only boys then. But there must have been some core of hatred to the whole thing. We didn't do it with anybody else."

"It's an odd thing to remember."

"It's all there is. The bombing, the destruction, the death and mutilation of civilians—I can't remember that. All that came later in the newsreels and the newspaper pictures, ready-made memories for the munitions workers and the home guard and the conscientious objectors. I only flew. I only remember flying. Everything else seemed in a different world."

A tremor shook the old man's body and echoed on in the shaking of the grey hand against the sheet. He gave a groan, a tight sound that gave the lie to the apparent feebleness of his lips.

A felt something like exhilaration. *Die*, he moaned to himself. *Oh, die. Die*. It was like a sex-ache.

He called B. She should see the death; it would cleanse them both. A stepped outside the room. Anticipation of release had brought a sweat out on his brow. Eventually B emerged.



"He was just over-excited," she said. "He's resting now. Why darling, you look ghastly."

Hedy was an automaton whose fingers were scalpels. Her private parts were choked with rust and he could feel nothing for her. She held up a portion of his gut and said, "See, I told you I could do it." He was in a hospital bed beneath a stage's proscenium arch. It hurt to turn his head, but turning it he could see the auditorium and the single, lonely spectator: Howard, in a white coat. Hedy stepped to the footlights and held up the grey piece of gut. Howard rose to applaud but missed his footing and slumped back into his seat. A spotlight began to burn in the theatre's roof. Its beam swung onto Craven's eyes and someone pushed knives into his brain. Blackness.

When he awoke, in a small anonymous, windowless room with flaking paint like a leper's skin, Howard was sitting beside his bed.

"Did she tell you I drank?" he asked. "It's true. But I'm not drunk now. I like you. I hold no grudges. I'd like to know you better. What do you find attractive about her?"

"Nothing," Craven croaked. The croak surprised him. It made his voice sound like a stranger's.

"It certainly didn't look that way."

"I wasn't... I couldn't have done anything. You embarrassed me when you appeared but you saved me from a greater embarrassment."

Howard nodded. "She affects me like that sometimes. Did she tell you she used to be a strip-tease artiste?"

"Yes." Because of his croak, Craven decided to limit himself to monosyllables wherever possible.

"It's not true. It's a fantasy of hers. She used to be a legitimate actress in the theatre until she started getting into overground high-cult mixed-media productions. She was called on to do a number of sex-scenes and in each case she turned off her partner, really demolished his erection. The performances were so ludicrous it killed her as an actress. That's why I drink. When I'm drunk I can do it, somehow she reaches me. I didn't used to drink at all before I met her. Did she tell you about the appendix case?"

"Yes."

"That's true. But the patient only had piles. And I had nothing to do with it. I was out on call at the time. She's unbalanced, but this is a Poor hospital and we need all the labour we can get."

Craven tried to move but he felt as weak as a baby.

"I gave you a sedative," said Howard. "I was a bit unbalanced myself at the time, for all I should have known better. I really thought you were some patient trying to rape her. Then I spoke to Dr Williams—the guy who brought you in—and found out who you were, but by that time it was too late. I'd blown a hypodermic-full on you. You'll feel as if you're on the brink of death for a few more hours, I'm afraid."

"What's the time?" Craven asked. "Would you mind telling me the time?"

"It's about one o'clock. If you're thinking of eating, I wouldn't recommend it. With your digestive system in its present relaxed state it would be like trying to stir cement with a feather."

"It's not that. This whole area is scheduled for air attack at two o'clock."

Howard frowned. "You're mixed up. You're thinking of some other area. There was nothing posted this morning. Anyway aerial bombardment of Hospital Zones is prohibited under the '78 Convention."

"It wouldn't have been posted. It's a special trial of a new media-bomb, devised to combat something called *Pain*, a suicide cult. And as for the '78 Convention—I don't think the people at M.A.L. even know there's a hospital here."

Howard laughed. "Now you're being delirious. Everybody knows about the old National." He stood, patted Craven's arm once, and left the room.

"What are you doing?"

B starts, turns from the window. "Watching the birds. The sparrows are nervous and the pigeons self-confident. The sparrows fly away when the pigeons appear."

"And the pigeons fly away when the cat appears," says A. "Because he's neither nervous or self-confident. He's a predator. It's his profession." He gives her a growl and a playful claw, followed by a pigeon-peck on the nose.

"You're in a good mood."

"I'm recovered," A says and tries again with his hands beneath her sweater.

"He's in the room below," B says. "Don't."

"You always say that. Darling, there's nothing unholy or unnatural about it."

"The noise might wake him," B says. "He'd know what we were doing."

"Christ, it wouldn't shock him. It might even give him pleasant memories. He was going on today about his WAACs and his WAAFs, about his days as a wild rover. He knows what it's about."

"You don't know what he might think or how it might affect him."

He laughed. "This is ridiculous. Do we have to go back to renting rooms in cheap, squalid hotels, like before we were married? Darling, we *are* married. You're my wife and I want to have you occasionally. What's more I think you want to be had."

"Of course I do but . . ."

"We can be very quiet," A says, arms around her, backing her against the bed so that she has to sit down. He slides her sweater up over her breasts, pushes her back, sinks his head in the mixture of wool and skin softness.

"Only, if we're very quiet," she says as she accepts the weight of his body.

Afterwards she is the one to break the silence, rising from beside him. "I thought I heard something. A groan."

"You're imagining it."

"I'll go and see." B pulls a robe around her.

"Darling, he *couldn't* have heard anything," A calls to her as she leaves the room. But he knows she will return needing his comfort and that he, spent, will have absolutely nothing to give her.

The negress, already gross, was also blown with pregnancy. When the first shell hit and the building shook, she was catapulted into Craven's room and clutched at the frame of his bed as the building shook again. Her nursing slip was torn over one huge pendulous breast which trembled, recording the M.A.L. bombardment like a fleshy seismograph.

Craven who had been sitting weakly on the edge of his bed, toes on the floor, trying to conjure up some hidden source of strength, groped towards this Earth Mother, this ultimate source of all strength. She caught him as he fell, in one firm arm. No legs, no knees, he let her support him.

"We're under attack," he told her and she nodded.

"Once I thought it might be a gas main or some demolition programme. But twice is total warfare."

She seemed to hug him to her stomach like some paradigm or proxy life she was trying to impress, through the skin wall, onto her unborn and perhaps now never-to-be-born child. In this manner they made the door and emerged into the corridor outside.

"Which way?" asked Craven. "We've got to get out. These old buildings have no systematic collapsability factor built into them. They just fragment. We're in a death trap."

She turned her nose to one end of the corridor, wrinkled it. "Something nasty that way," she said. "Fire, or something worse."

Carrying him now, she started in the opposite direction. They passed through an empty ward and in one of the windows Craven saw a flight of jets climbing away from the bombing zone like small birds.

They came to an elevator, gates ajar. A cage had never seemed so open and inviting.

"That smell again," said the negress and on cue an opaque cloud rolled around the corner of the corridor before them.

"Aphrodisiac dust," said Craven and it was so close they could almost see the texture of desire in its roiling clouds.

They went into the elevator cage and the negress placed him hunched on the floor and hit the button. They rode down through the floors, all of them deserted, to the basement.

As they emerged into the basement corridor the greatest spasm yet shook the dying hospital. There was a crumpling above them that howled down doppler-like and struck with

the force of tons of rubble the elevator cage they had just left. The cage sustained the loose silt debris for a moment and then collapsed, shooting clouds of old-fashioned brick-dust into the corridor.

The Earth Mother, at home in the bowels of the earth, picked up Craven once more. They went into the basement maze and met a disconsolate bare-foot figure. It was Hedy, her face caked-white to match her powdery uniform. She rushed to the figure in the negress's arms but when she saw it was Craven she slumped away, supporting herself against the wall. She said, "I thought you were Howard."

"Come with us. We'll find him," said Craven. He felt ridiculous, slung in the negress's arms, dispensing hope.

They followed the corridor, Hedy trailing behind, and emerged at last by way of a short and narrow flight of steps into the cratered hospital garden.

The ground was strewn with bodies, but they were breathing forms, isolated, coupled, *ménages-à-trois* and even a *quatre* (and once, just once, the splendid ingenuity of seven figures interlaced in a human Star of David).

A nearby screen of trees and bushes had been torn ragged by aphrodisiac grenades, the facetiously named Life-savers. The depleted vegetation, beyond which Craven could make out grey slum dwellings in various stages of systemized collapse, was stirred by a sudden breeze and a helicopter appeared, dipping into the garden. Almost simultaneously it began to rain. Craven caught the golden liquid honey drops on his skin. The cloud-seeding had been successful then. He opened his mouth to suck the alcoholic rain of life from the air.

"I think you can set me down now," he told the negress. "I feel much better."

"I think I ought to," she said. "I feel pains."

"You're not . . ."

"I think I am."

"Good God, we need a doctor." Craven turned to Hedy. "Can you?"

Hedy shook her head. She looked panicked. "I never saw it done before," she said. "Everything but that."

"I can manage," said the negress and lying back against the earth she took the first contraction.

"What's going on?" asked a familiar voice and Hedy squealed. Howard and Dr Williams had each other in a buddy-buddy arm-lock, miming drunken Siamese twins.

Howard released Williams and pointed at the negress who was now panting, caught up in the accelerated birth process.

"Doctor, do your duty."

"Doctor, do yours," said Williams, his milky-hair turned into a slick cap by the rain.

"I intend to," said Howard, catching Hedy and dragging her off, delighted, towards the bushes.

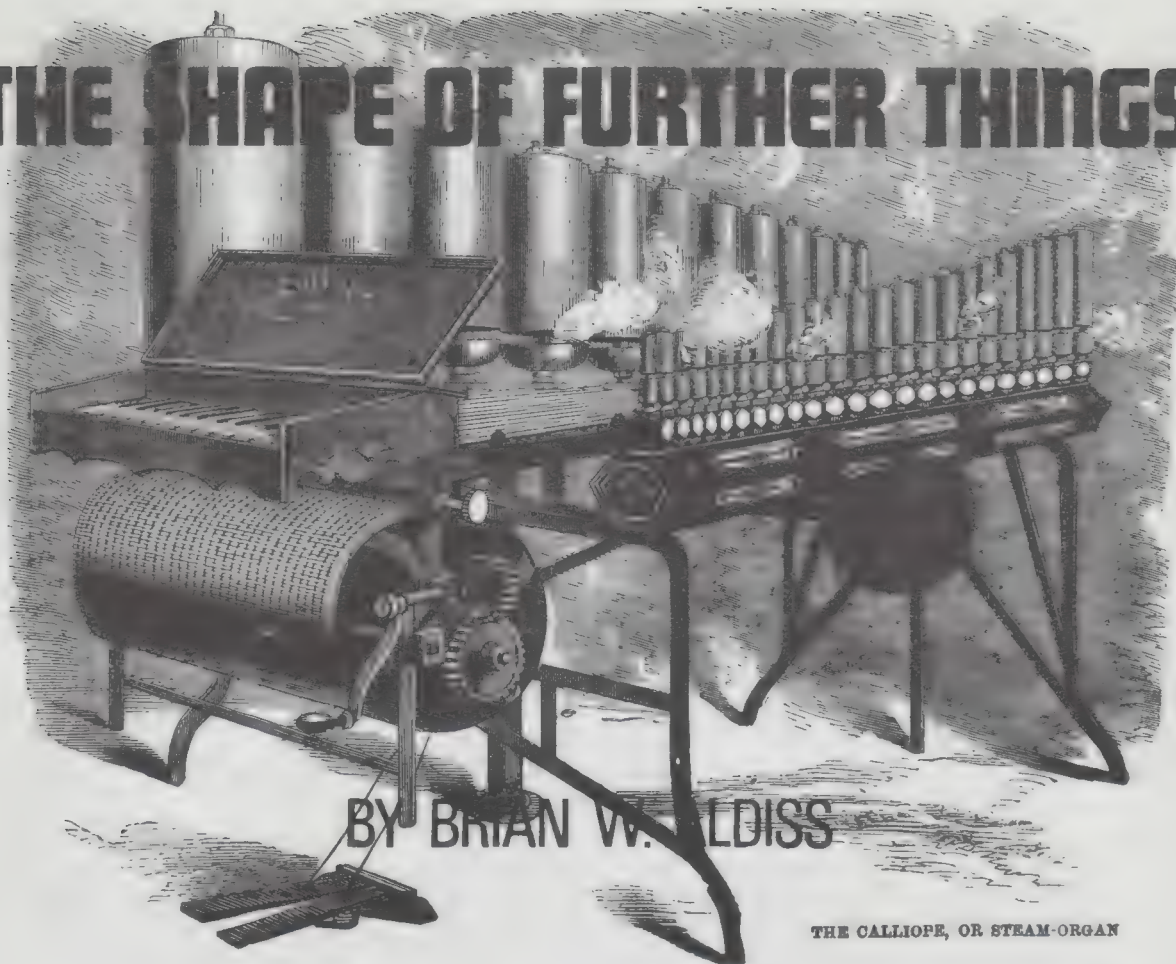
The helicopter fanned down nearby with a roar and Craven walked over to it. Despite the tonic rain he still felt deathly tired. A strong hand lifted him aboard.

"You must be Image," said a smiling M.A.L. officer. "We found your abandoned car, but that was when it was too late to call off the strike. How would you say it went, sir? I mean, from the inside?"

The helicopter's engine revved and it lifted, swaying, climbing slowly. Down below, oblivious to the down-draught, Dr Williams was delivering the negress of a brown child of the earth.

"I'd say, inside or out, we couldn't call it anything other than an unqualified success," said Craven and, smiling, he dropped into the officer's arms and began to snore. ■

THE SHAPE OF FURTHER THINGS



BY BRIAN W. ALDISS

THE CALLIOPE, OR STEAM-ORGAN

Introductory: A Fantastic Vision After Midnight

FIFTEEN MINUTES INTO Thursday 9th January 1969. I've been walking up and down my drive by the light of a half-moon, low in the east, over Oxford, over East Anglia, over the North German plain, over Russia, over the slow-grinding globe. The drive, about a hundred yards long, is fringed by lime and beech trees. Their shadows were long in the moonlight.

Long and entangled, like the terminator between Time Present and Time Future.

My location: a little village called Southmoor, in Berkshire, England. Time and place are important. Relatively important. Important in the ticking mechanism of my mind. Margaret, heavy with child, goes to bed; I come up here to my study to write—a decision I took in the drive while pacing up and down among the cool shadows.

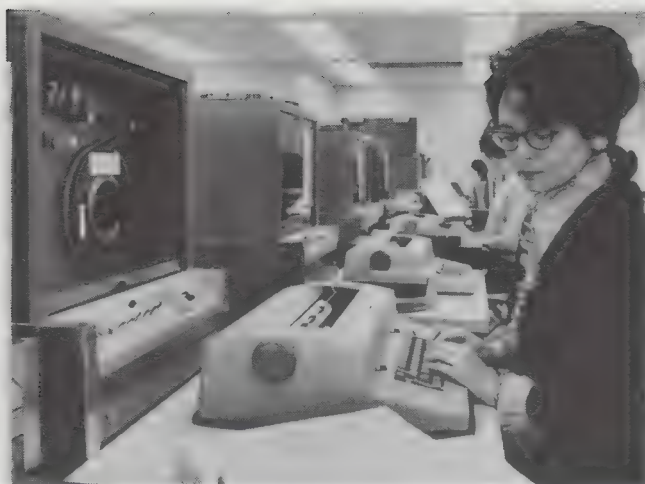
As I did my walking, the ticking was as loud and clear as the moon. Thought. A separate thing, altogether removed from the ancestor-invoking silence of night. My body carried it effortlessly up and down, up and down. What that body of thought was, I will try to tell here. First, get the simple thing right—habitat, the old human thing: man married to his local acre. I'm married to my local acre, though in fact we have lived in this place for only half a year. We may stay here for the rest of our years. It is intensely dear to me—I own Heath House in the way that the moon and tree shadows own me: by falling across me and influencing me intensely. As I swing restlessly northwards up the drive, I see the house. Some lights still burning. Otherwise a black outline, square uncompromis-

ing. Built by a Baptist missionary in 1837, a righteous man who came to bring the light to this hamlet over a century ago. He left his mark on the territory if not the minds, building the local chapel as well as this house.

The house is black through the trees, against the deepest blue of the sky. Uncompromising, as I say. Only when you get close do you discern—dimly in the moonlight cast across the face of the house—that a later minister, more relaxed, more Victorian than the first incumbent, built on to the original slate-roofed pencil-box a gloriously pretentious porch, with four columns of the Corinthian order. And a fine bay window. And an ample conservatoire, which later collapsed and has now disappeared, though its ground plan remains in the form of black-and-red tiles outside the dining room window. This is my house. Pro tem.

It became my house—half of it is Margaret's—through my will and our intention. We could not afford it, but we bought it. You have already met two of the most compelling reasons why we bought it. The drive, and the schizophrenic front of the house: whose severe and rigorous outline melts into a certain robust *luxuria* as you draw nearer. I recognised a physical analogue of my own character when I saw it.

But my pacing. My pacing after bedtime. After all, I am forty-three, and have at last taken to going to bed regularly and early, since our marriage three years ago. For the pleasure and profit of it.



Typewriters linked to magnetic tape storage units. Taped information can then be reorganised for computer typesetting.

Friends of ours have just left. Dr Christopher Evans and his wife Nancy. They came down from Twickenham for drinks, dinner, and talk. And after we had waved goodbye to them from the Corinthian porch, my brain remained at high pitch, churning over what we had said and had not managed to say.

Haven't you ever thought to yourself after a pleasant evening—or even after a dull afternoon—that if you could but have it all again, preferably in slow motion, then you could trace in it all the varied strands of your life? Haven't you ever thought, on certain beautiful and privileged days of your life (and the dull days are privileged too), that they contain all those varied strands? And the fact that certain finite strands of time, like our evening tonight, could contain all those strands is an incredible wealth, rather than a poverty?

Isn't wealth in life to be accounted as much in its condensation as its dispersal? I see the answer to my rhetorical question is no, for I have phrased it wrongly. Put it this way. Life needs diversity; the more the better; but the diversity only acquires value if it can occasionally be glimpsed through the magnifying lens of an evening, or of the sort of brief span of time that a mind can hold conveniently in the metaphorical palm of its hand.

This feeling had often come over me. For once I will put it to the test. I will explore all the strands of what, after all, is only a fairly representative evening. (I have often talked longer, and to closer friends, and drunk more!) Does this mean I am embarking—oh God, not that!—on a whole book? Time now: Zero zero forty-three. The time terminator moving with elaborate ease.

If our conversation had a main theme, it was the research on which Chris is involved, about which I shall have more to say later. At the moment, it's sufficient to say that we were discussing his theory of dreaming which treats the brain as a functioning entity similar in effect to the computer; and that this theory is immensely of the present day, since it couples hard and soft science, since it couples man and machine. I subscribe to his theory, so our debate

roved round only marginal points; for both of us, these marginal points were the gravy of the joint.

For we were asking, implicitly, what is the brain? And thus, what is man? And thus, where is he going? And we discovered that we had been thinking about this question for a number of years. Since our childhood, in fact. And this is what this book will also have to be about. It was not just what Chris and Nancy said. It was also what we didn't say: for in my case, behind everything lay my reservations—not so much about science, but about the role that scientists and their base wallahs are making science play in our lives.

Before Chris came, I'd been looking up Sir Thomas Browne, to see what he had to say about dreaming. I remembered two famous passages. I remembered, of course, his famous essay *On Dreams*, which begins with that sonorous beginning: "Half our lives we pass in the shadow of Earth, and the brother of Death exacteth a third part of our lives. . . . Our nights are peered out in fantastical visions, wherein we are professedly deceived." The other passage I remembered, occurs in his *Letter to a Friend*, which is the account of the passing of a mutual friend, in which there is a paragraph beginning: "He was now past the healthful Dreams of the Sun, Moon and Stars, in their Clarity and proper Courses. 'Twas too late to dream of Flying, of Limpid Fountains, smooth Waters, white Vestments, and fruitful green Trees, which are the Visions of healthful Sleeps, and at good Distance from the Grave."

These passages I read to Chris. Not that they added greatly to his knowledge. But they have a beauty that supplements any argument. And Browne is relevant today. A mid-seventeenth century man, a general practitioner of Norwich—until the Black Death England's second city—he stood between the mediaeval and the modern, partly subscribing to Galen's and, through Galen, Hippocrates' received ideas—partly trying to think and observe for himself—but not entirely succeeding. The modern analogies are clear. We also only partly succeed. But what is the post-modern, the future, thinking towards which we work? This was also the subject of our talk this evening.

I also mentioned to Chris the curious essay by the German Von Kleist on the way ideas are spontaneously generated in conversation. We generated ideas tonight. It's a common experience. And it's a common experience that I want to pin down here. To give to people who believe that the future is something more than a period in history, like, say, the Victorian Age.

Chris talked a great deal about the nature of words. He spoke of the reverence that primitive people have for words. Being strongly averse to telepathy, he was talking of the way in which words have to be painfully formulated, and how, in our processes of selection of them, we have to slow down our thinking, and impoverish it, and dilute the whole business of mind-to-mind communication: so that speech can never have superseded telepathy, because even a primitive form of telepathy would have such great directness that the labour of speech could never provide a substitute for it.

But computers will so speed communications between each other, that they will gain the equivalent of telepathy.

He was saying how much and how fast computers have developed. How this speed goes almost unobserved—unobserved both by the general public and by the



NASA communications centre for coordination of global tracking networks

technicians working on computers; because both these classes are too near to or too far from the subject to have the proper perspective, just as the growth of a plant is more observable by the weekend gardener than by a real daily man or a casual visitor to the garden. He (and, he courteously implied, I) could see this speedy growth, being inter-disciplinary men. We began to indulge in conjecture on this theme, to build a simple partial diagram of the future.

Chris said, "At the National Physical Laboratory where I work, I'm a subscriber to Telcomp, which links me to a computer a few miles away. You could get the G.P.O. to put you on the circuit too, if you wanted, although it's pretty costly as yet. You get a separate telephone and a switch-box, and can just dial yourself onto the computer. It comes through on a sort of telex machine not much bigger than an ordinary typewriter, and talks to you in almost ordinary English.

"This is the area where some of the major advances are now coming—the software is being radically simplified. Soon you'll be able to talk to computers practically man-to-man.

"You must come over and play with this computer some time."

We talked about the increase of knowledge and information, together with the parallel increase in its availability. That availability has to increase immeasurably. In a few of my stories I have written about wrist-computers, computers of perhaps limited abilities that—thanks to increasing micro-miniaturisation processes—can be strapped to the wrist like watches. Talking to Chris Evans, I saw this was a mistaken idea. Link-ups between big computers are perhaps only a matter of time. Computer spin-off is piling up: fast-reading machines are coming onto the market, mass-production of cheap memories is on its way. Soon, soon, the contents of antiquated knowledge-repositories like the British Museum Reading Room can be transferred to computers. Imagine the jump in potential when that store of knowledge alone is available to a dialling subscriber. When that and similar information-system-nuclei are really available at the fingertips... the possessors of those fingertips will be living virtually in a different kind of environment, with a lushness which will make ours seem like a desert with a few antique temples standing crumbling

here and there.

What one will then wear on the wrist will be, not a mini-computer, but a computerised dialling system to the big hook-up.

The implications of this are almost limitless. The nature of learning is going to have to change; in a world where all the facts of a culture are at one's fingertips, education must transform itself.

Curiously enough, what is perhaps the first inkling of newer educational systems is now coming through. Britain's first—and the world's most far-reaching—Open University goes on the air soon with TV courses with elaborate soft-ware backing. It will be turning out its first B.A.s in 1974. A freeing of knowledge by mass-communication, a move at last against the segregation of facts in monasteries, universities and colleges.

While Chris and I were talking about these transformations we were not alone. You should have the scene. The exterior of Heath House by moonlight you have pictured; now come inside. Please be welcome.

From the pretentious porch, you enter the front hall. The dining room is on your right, the living room on your left. We have dined on the right; now we are sitting comfortably in the room on the left, round a log fire. Apart from my fine cat, Nickie, those present are Chris and I and our two wives and Margaret's mother. Mama is living with us until her bungalow becomes available. The ladies have been talking about children, their own particular bit of the future under their charge. When they hear what we are saying about education, the two conversations merge.

"But a formal education is surely very good for a child's mind," says Mama, who was a teacher. "It isn't merely a stuffing with facts but a structure that teaches a child to think."

We are in agreement with this, but I add, "Despite that, it is *also* a stuffing with facts; and to a child it often appears merely a stuffing with facts."

"And much Victorian education was just a cram," Margaret points out. "Today's better education has only slightly grown out of its old ways."

"Quite so. And hasn't been able to throw off its origins. You need to stuff a kid's mind with details about the wheat production of Canada and the nonsense that takes the place on the square of the hypotenuse. But in future that need won't exist. Facts won't be kept inefficiently in the head; they'll be the inheritance of every man, like the franchise. On your wrist—or maybe round your knee if man is going to become a more sedentary animal and mini-trousers arrive!—you will have an instrument that can tee you in immediately to a central computer which will provide whatever facts you require."

"Exactly," said Chris, "except that 'immediately' may not be the right word, since the whole operation will probably come under the province of the G.P.O."

We laugh.

We decided that what is required is a Communications Company, under which telephonic and radiophonic channels will be integrated. But Chris's small reservation—"immediately may not be the right word"—symbolises something important when trying to visualise the future, something I generally attempt to represent in my own fiction; when new things arrive, they function without attaining perfection; and even their long continuance may not bring them nearer to perfection, since other factors in that continuance militate against it. One example, before we return to the conversation.



A keyboard in standard typewriter layout is used to feed the IBM System/360 computer in the background

Let's take the G.P.O., already mentioned.

The ordinary telephone, although its design is backward compared with the beautiful handpieces used by Swedish subscribers, is a pleasing looking and efficient instrument. It will be more efficient when a vision-screen is added, and that in turn will also be more efficient when developments in holography allow a three-D image (though it could be that the G.P.O. might drag its feet long enough to come right out with a three-D screen straight off). But the system *behind* the handset is not merely an object, a technological still-life, but an organisation, and organisations are always subject to stresses and strains. So that, perfect though your phone may be, it may take you ten minutes and a couple of wrong numbers before you speak to a subscriber ten miles away.

Why haven't the G.P.O. engineers got the system to rights by now? Because the system will not hold still, items obsolesce, relays fail, the number of subscribers grows—the G.P.O. is a physical embodiment of T. S. Eliot's line about "a raid on the inarticulate with shabby equipment always deteriorating"...

So it will be, I'd bet, with the CCDC (Computer Centre Dial Control). Perhaps I'm merely being guilty of an ingrained British suspicion of big organisations when I say that it is in the largest organisations the largest inefficiencies occur; chaos is a constant factor of systems. Suppose that, in the year 2002, a chap in Newcastle upon Tyne wants information about coproliths which he knows is held in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. He punches an

eleven-digit number on his "ward" (as the instrument on his wrist is commonly called by analogy with "watch") and so is connected by radio and cable with the computer center in London. He asks for the information. The computer keeps the line open while it communicates through its own ultra-rapid channels with the Smithsonian computer. The information comes back, and is given in English to the subscriber in Newcastle.

Alternatively, depending on how elaborate the in-coming information is, he may get it in visual form from over a TV-attachment in his home or both, or in printed form over the same teletype that delivers his letters and his newspapers. Whatever method, his wait is negligible.

Thus, things always work in science fiction stories! Perfectly! But think of the discrepancies that might creep in on even such a simple operation in real life, the times the subscriber may be cut off in mid-sentence or mid-pause! Nor is it everyone who can dial an eleven-digit number with facility. Organisation comes between people and things, just as it comes between people and people.

Despite the malfunctions of the system, however, the ward will be able to furnish you with whatever information you require.

Mama said, "I still wonder what will happen if formal education disappears."

"We can't tell," I said, "but at least you can be sure there will be no vacuum. What I imagine will happen is that education will be completely overhauled. You know that I'm generally accounted a pessimist, simply because I don't see that the basic human condition has radically improved over the centuries—though I'd grant you amelioration as far

as dentistry and allied fields are concerned—but on this issue I'm extremely optimistic.

"Can you imagine the really radical changes in human thought and feeling that might come about if the educational system were allowed to take children between the ages of, say, five and fifteen—just ten years—and teach them patterns of thought and behaviour which would help them not to pass exams but to live happily and sanely?"

The Education of H. G. Wells

I get this far and my vision fails. It is almost three o'clock in the morning. January 9th. I put out the light and stare through the study window. My eyes lose their flowers and bars and wounds of light; reality blossoms outside, lit by the moon the incredible random patterns of reality. Moonlight still slants across the drive and the field. I can see one of the horses standing there, under the clump of Scots pines. Is the horse sleeping? Chris should measure its eye movements.

Something benevolent is generated in my mind, possibly because I am looking at a still picture that is not still, like a Warhol movie, restful for the eye-movements if somewhat numbing for the brain. At this moment, standing relaxed at the window, I am indulging in a sensuous secret connection, connected to infinitudes of experience that stand outside the frame of time: experience beyond analysis, at whose origins we can scarcely glance. My mind is open wide, as the iris of Nickie's eye will be at this hour.

Only simple and symbolic things confront me. That very moon, though in an earlier phase, was orbited by astronauts for the first time over the Christmas just gone; they left no more trace in the heavens than a wound in water; nevertheless, my brain retains their still trajectory. Their voyage is a mark in the mind. Moonlit nights are different from now on, framed with fatidical powers.

All things are in union. I go reluctantly to bed.

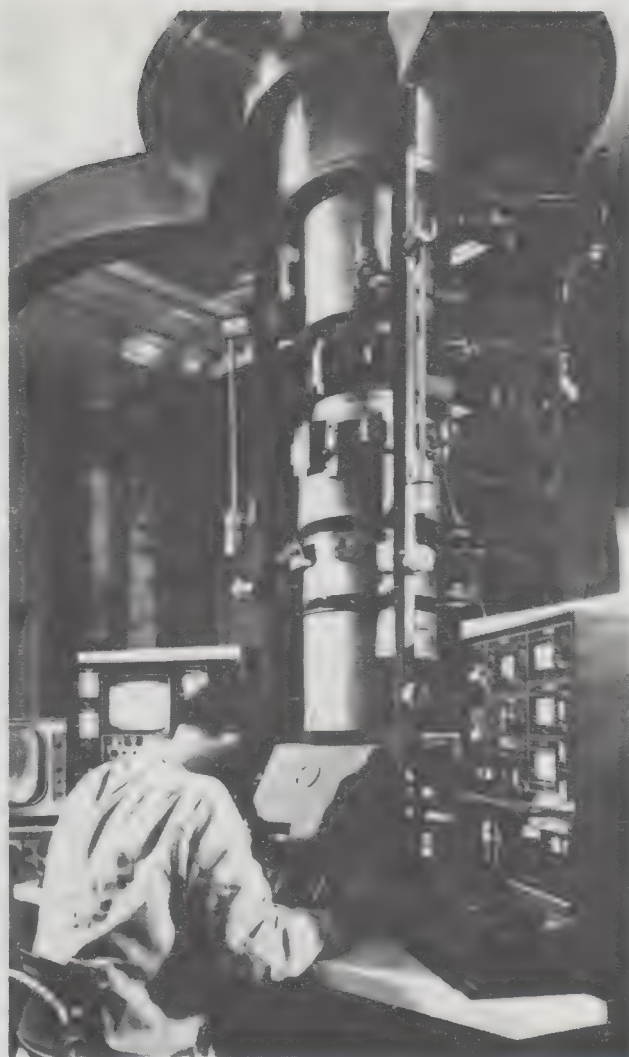
Next morning begins with the jolly calls of Timothy, now almost eighteen months old. In ten weeks, he will have a new brother or sister. He is Margaret's first-born, and my third child, a dear and happy creature, full of humour and energy, intelligent and therefore cautious, highly observant, madly talkative, just starting to communicate by speech. He communicates his good spirits to me, although I am also cheerful, being full of the book I so rashly began the night before.

Downstairs, the ruins of the meal we ate with the Evanses greet us. Some of the fine beef bourguignon remains. The wine's all gone, and Margaret and I scoffed the last of the flan at midnight, after the guests had gone.

We breakfast cosily in the kitchen. Leaving the debris to Margaret and Mama, I come upstairs and am writing again by ten o'clock. Fog outside, and frost on the tufts of grass. The mood of the weather has changed completely since three o'clock this morning.

My mood remains the same. I'm filled with the sense that last night encapsulated many of the important trends of my life, and of my response to science and speculation. I remember the feeling before; I remember it in the Continental Hotel in Oslo, over a year ago, standing in that beautiful hotel room and wishing I could capture the thing entire.

"... Would we not shatter it and then



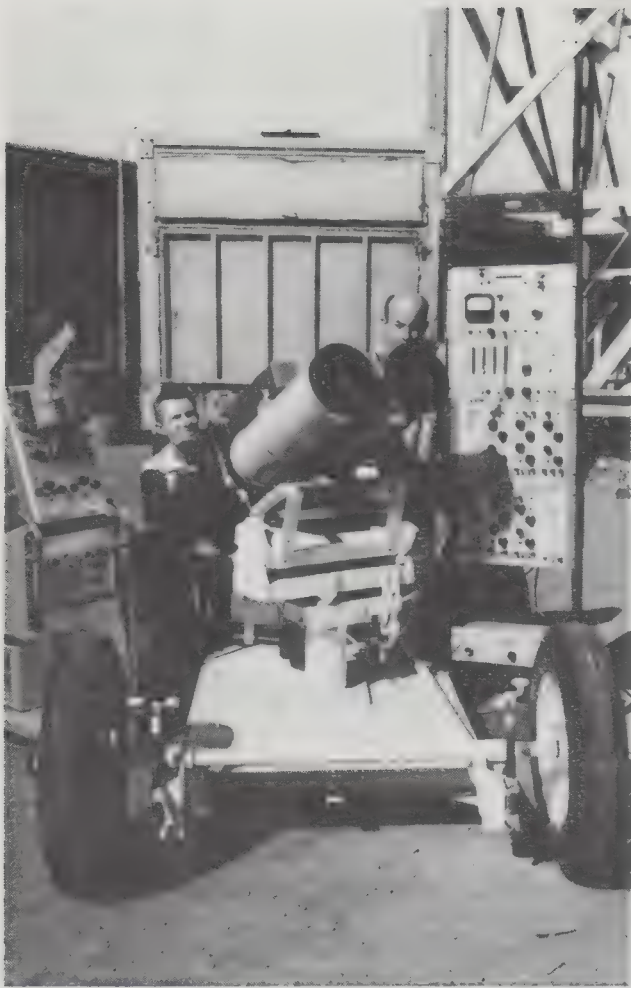
The 1,000,000 volt electron microscope at United Steel Corp. research centre

Remould it nearer to our heart's desire?"

No! To remould would be to shatter. The revelation has to come over at once in its untidiness and its total relevance.

Presumably this is one thing that a proper education in the future might be able to do. It would strengthen the mind's power to hold thought. Chris was talking last night about the way ignorant people use words as if they were bricks, behind which they proceed to build themselves a wall; whereas words are—what did he say they were? I've forgotten! Something tremulous and fluid, far removed from a Fletton! But the educated also fall into category troubles. I have seen the way writer-friends of mine have been pushed into categories by journalists, to their detriment; Kingsley Amis (my own generation) suffered for a number of years from the Angry Young Man label. I suffer from the label "science fiction writer", which allows the *Times Literary Supplement* to toss one of my speculative novels, *Report on Probability A*, to a hard-core sf man, who savages it for not being hard-core sf! But under a proper education for living, such desperate needs to pigeonhole things would disappear. Life fades on the stem when it is classified: the life of the spirit, I mean.

"Only connect!" All things connect, all things are holophrastic. Education in future must be a marriage, not a divorce; then the manifold isolations of the contemporary spirit, its wars and illnesses, may truly and for the first time



Lasers are now used for analysis of clouds, dust and atmospheric layers in meteorology

enjoy a chance to fade away like old soldiers.

Despite all the drink last night—and I realise, flagging now at a quarter to twelve, that gin followed by beer, followed by wine, chased down ultimately by ample whisky, is an ambitious programme at the most youthful of times—despite all that drink, I am curiously optimistic this morning. That I should place such faith in education! It is a trap I have often castigated H. G. Wells for falling into. He thought education would bring a better world.

Now I am thinking it. But I have a grave reservation, to be mentioned in its place.

Education could, in time, bring a better world. The information explosion, coupled with the communication explosion that is surely coming, will change all our ideas—including, surely, ideas about what education should mean. We have the privilege of standing on Wells's shoulders and seeing clearly visions that that great man only managed to glimpse. (He was the first to do so, and so was thought very strange. Thank God, he was strange!) What education was and meant in Wells's time is vividly portrayed in his *Experiment in Autobiography*, one of the key autobiographies of this century.

Wells saw education as an escape from the intellectual poverty of his early environment, a way to greater freedom. Perhaps those who are motivated as he was will always have the vision of education as a green tree, something that grows all through life, rather than a stuffy form-room. Young Wells was terribly earnest, though his earnestness was tempered by a saving sense of humour. Here is part of

his description of life as a teacher at Midhurst Grammar School.

"In a novel of mine called *Love and Mr Lewisham* which is about just such a Grammar School teacher as I was, I have described how he pinned up on his wall a 'Schema', planned to make the utmost use of his time and opportunities. I made that Schema, even to the pedantry of calling it that and not calling it plainly a scheme. Every moment in the day had its task. I was never to rest while I was awake. Such things—like my refusal to read novels or play games—are not evidence of an intense and concentrated mind; they are evidence of an acute sense of the need for concentration in a discursive and inattentive brain. I was not attacking the world by all this effort and self-control; I was making my desperate get-away from the shop and the street. I was bracing myself up tremendously. Harris and I would go for one-hour walks and I insisted on a pace of four miles an hour. During this pedestrianism we talked in gasping shouts."

I was bracing myself tremendously. English literary gentlemen hate all Wells stood for. Not only was he socialist, he dared to imagine the future might change (an insight that commended him to the young Orwell), and he braced himself tremendously. But there was more than one side to Wells. It happened that he braced other people tremendously. Women loved him, and retained their affection for him even when they ceased to go to bed with him. The fact was, he liked women; and apparently he smelt good; one lady said that he smelt of honey. He was a man of many interests. The next paragraph after the one above runs as follows.

"Mrs Walton my landlady who kept the sweetstuff shop, was a dear little energetic woman with a round friendly face, brown eyes and spectacles. I owe her incalculable things. I paid her twelve shillings a week and she fed me well. She liked cooking and she liked her food to be eaten. My meals at Midhurst are the first that I remember with pleasure. Her stews were marvellously honest and she was great at junket, custard and whortleberry and blackcurrant jam. Bless her memory."

If any man created one whole aspect of the twentieth century, it was H. G. Wells. How curious that Cyril Connolly omits him entirely from his volume, *The Modern Movement*, which aspires to discuss one hundred key books that have informed the contemporary spirit since 1880. You know very well whom you will find: Norman Douglas, Ford Madox Ford, E. M. Forster, John Betjeman. Louis MacNeice and, save the mark, Ivy Compton Burnett. No H. G. Wells, creator of *The Time Machine*, *A Modern Utopia* and *The Island of Dr Moreau*.

All of which may take us some way from education, but no distance from Chris's and my discussion, for we discovered that we were both admirers of Wells. To him, we shall return; and in homage, this book, diary, or whatever it is, shall be named—if I complete it!—after one of Wells's most interesting and ghastly books.

Before leaving Wells, I want to quote again from his autobiography, to show what liberating effect science had on him and his generation, born in the shadow of Darwin. Wells had seen the defeat of the Church in the great Evolution debate, and was contemptuous of it, saying that even the Roman Catholic controversialists discovered "that the Church had always known all about Evolution and the place of man in nature, just as it had always known about the place of the solar system in space."

For Wells—and for his generation, and generations before



John Glenn's ticker tape welcome

and after—the Church had become the enemy. The Church had enthroned itself as the Queen of the Sciences in the Dark Ages, dictating on all questions, whether astronomical, mathematical, medical, or what, and was by last century part and parcel of the forces of repression. It was only deposed from its usurped position of eminence by Science (though Socialism also helped, to Wells's mind). I hope to suggest later that this attitude, still prevalent in my boyhood and today, may be due for revision.

In the 1880s it was different. A new day was breaking, and the sun was science. This is part of Wells's description of his time in Huxley's biology class.

"Our chief discipline was a rigorous analysis of vertebrate structure, vertebrate embryology and the succession of vertebrate forms in time. We felt our particular task was the determination of the relationship of groups by the acutest possible criticism of structure. The available fossil evidence was not a tithe of what has been unearthed today; the embryological material also fell far short of contemporary resources; but we had the same excitement of continual discoveries, confirming or correcting our conclusions, widening our outlook and filling up new patches of the great jig-saw puzzle, that the biological student still experiences. The study of zoology in this phase was an acute, delicate, rigorous and sweepingly magnificent series of exercises. It was a grammar of form and a criticism of fact. That year I spent in Huxley's class was, beyond all

question, the most educational year of my life. It left me under that urgency for coherence and consistency, that repugnance from haphazard assumptions and arbitrary statements, which is the essential distinction of the educated from the uneducated mind. . . .

"This biological course of Huxley's was purely and strictly scientific in its character. It kept no other end in view but the increase and the scrutiny and perfection of the knowledge within its scope. I never heard or thought of practical applications or business uses for what we were unfolding in that year's work, and yet the economic and hygienic benefits that have flowed from biological work in the past forty years have been immense. But these aspects were negligible by the standards of our study. For a year I went shabby and grew shabbier. I was under-fed and not very well housed, and it did not matter to me in the least because of the vision of life that was growing in my mind. I worked exhaustively and spent an even happier year than the one I had had at Midhurst. I was rather handicapped by the irregularity and unsoundness of my general education, but nevertheless I was one of the three who made up the first class in the examinations in zoology which tested our work."

"The vision of life that was growing in my mind. . . ." Increasing knowledge of science has produced that elevating sensation in many of us. ■

(More extracts from this book will appear in later issues.)

SURFACE IF YOU CAN

BY
TERRY CHAMPAGNE

MRS AMIS FELT a need. In spite of her health and wealth and elaborately equipped Bel Air mansion, she wanted to do-give-get something. So she placed an ad in the newspaper of the closest overcrowded university.

For Rent. Conv. bmb. sheltr., furn., util. pd., priv. estate, Bel Air, cpl. pref., \$95., ph. 273-5840.

PAM AND ALLAN met in a restricted, upper class poetry writing class. Pam's sophomore standing as an art major proved no barrier when she impulsively registered for the class, despite lack of all prerequisites. Poetry was her passion—along with art, music, ballet and Renaissance architecture. She was a beautiful person.

When she looked at Allan, she melted inside herself and a trenchant warmth fell between her legs. She could tell instantly that he was a beautiful person. Tall and broad and narrow, with heavy brown eyes, the jewels of his depths.

She admired his sensitivity and style. He admired her brightness, originality and trim, rounded body.

They said they would be right over, so Mrs Amis watched for them. By the time they had walked to the door, she knew they were just right.

"Hello," she smiled, "I'm Mrs Amis."

After they were all pleased to meet each other, Mrs Amis said, "But I'm sure you're anxious to see the shelter."

They followed Mrs Amis down a hall, into a massive game room, through tinted sliding glass doors, across a stone terrace skirting the pool, and onto an expanse of well-kept lawn which stretched to distant trees that obscured the wall.

As they walked, Mrs Amis asked, "Are you both students at the university?"

"Yes."

"And what subjects are you majoring in?"

"English lit," said Allan.

"I'm majoring in art," said Pam, "but I may switch to English."

"How lovely," replied Mrs Amis. "And where do your parents live?"

Allan replied first. "They used to live in Pasadena, but when I started school here, they bought a house in Huntington Beach. They live there now."

"My folks are in Thousand Oaks," Pam said.

(Thousand Oaks is one of the many communities which service a part of the vast tract that makes up Los Angeles' suburbia. The only unique thing about Thousand Oaks is that it is located in Ventura County.)

"Well, here we are." Mrs Amis bent down to the cement encased hatch and drew it open. "Follow me," she said as she descended the steep, stairlike ladder, down into a dark well. At the bottom, she fumbled a few moments till she found the light switch.

Allan and Pam stood on the dark blue, deep pile wall to wall carpeting at the foot of the stairwell, and gazed around the room. The only furniture was a huge divan which matched the carpet and a long, low hatch-cover coffee table which had been painted white to match the smooth, white concrete walls and ceiling. The thirty-five foot length of the left wall was entirely taken up by built-in shelves, cabinets and wardrobes, all painted white with blue trim. At the far end of the room was a small, fully equipped kitchenette, with matching decor.

"The couch folds out into a king size bed and there's a folding table in the kitchen. Over here (opposite the kitchenette, next to the stairs) is the toilet." She opened the door of a tiny cubicle containing a toilet bowl.

"It's only a chemical toilet," she continued, "but it's quite adequate. You'll have to do all your bathing in the kitchen, though."

They all wandered back to the living area. Pam looked at it all again. "We can really use all this storage space," she said. Then she noticed a row of meters in the wall. "What are these dials for?"

Mrs Amis tried to remember. "This first one measures the outside radiation. I can't remember what it's called. And these others, I think, are connected to the air and water purification systems. It's been so long." She seemed lost in thought or reminiscences, but eventually she continued. "You know, if there ever is an attack, the hatch seals automatically and keeps you safe and sound until the radiation is gone. Then the two of you could return to the land and begin the race anew. You're such a lovely couple."

They mumbled their thank yous.

"This is just perfect," Pam said. "And it has so much character." She looked up at Allan.

"We'll take it," he said.



"Wonderful. I'm so happy I can do something to help you young people. Education is so important. You kids today are the hope of the future."

How fresh and fertile young Pam looks, she thought as she watched them go. And how strong and manly her husband looks. Why, his long, thick hair makes him look even more virile. What a beautiful couple.

Shortly after Pam and Allan moved in, the cockroaches moved in. They knew that Pam and Allan weren't any more beautiful than any other people. It wasn't long before the cockroaches ventured out of the piles of boxes of books, papers and art supplies.

Pam arrived home before Allan on Monday afternoon. She dumped the stuff she was carrying on a pile of other stuff, adopted a cheerful wifely mien and walked toward the kitchenette. There was a sinkful of unwashed dishes which she filled with sudsy water and left. While the dishes soaked, she bent down and opened the tiny refrigerator. The steak and mushrooms she had planned for dinner last week were still there. Along with some milk and eggs, a dab of butter, a large wilted head of lettuce, a few cherry tomatoes and prunes, and half a chocolate bar. In the freezer were two boil bags containing corn and French green beans, and an almost-full half-gallon of the world's worst ice-cream which she hadn't gotten around to throwing out yet. She took a few tomatoes and a piece of chocolate, shut the door and walked to the end of the counter. There, she opened a decanter marked Tea and

rolled a joint which she set aside to share with Allan later. Then she sat down at the kitchen table with the tomatoes and the chocolate and last week's *Free Press* which she hadn't gotten around to reading.

When Allan came in, Pam put down the newspaper and walked to him. He started to dump his books on the open, un-made sofa-bed, but pushed aside a pile of debris on the coffee table and placed them there instead.

"Hi."

"Hi."

They embraced. He pulled her down, beside him, on the bed.

"I rolled a joint. I'll go get it." She rose.

She returned with joint, matches and ashtray. While they were smoking, they spoke in strained stage whispers, trying to keep the smoke down at the same time.

"How was your day?" she asked, handing him the joint a little bit smaller.

He took a drag and replied, "Great!" He took another shorter toke and continued, "After class today, Horri-son asked me what my plans were, where I was going to grad school. He already knows I'm staying here. Anyway, it turns out he wants me on his staff of TA's next quarter." He took another quick puff and offered it to Pam.

She sucked in a lungful of heavy smoke that permeated every cell of her body. When she spoke, her voice was in another world. "Teacher's Ass. Are you proud of that?" She handed him the half-smoked joint.

This time, he replied before he dragged. "Someone has to do it. It might as well be me, because I'll do a damn good job of it. I am planning to go into education, you know." He took a hearty drag and gave her the rest.

She took a small mechanical puff. "I'm sorry, Allan. I didn't mean to attack you, personally. I just hate classes where you only see the teacher once a month and he never sees you. I know you'll make a fantastic teaching assistant. I just wish that job weren't necessary." She looked down at the roach, took a quick, tiny puff and handed it to Allan.

He took as long a drag of the hot roach as he could. "Be careful. We could all, quite easily, be automated into obsolescence."

They smiled. She noticed the size of the joint and said, "Do you want me to get the roach clip?" Ready to rise.

He put his hand on her shoulder and said, "No, I'm stoned."

"So am I," she said.

He put the roach out in the ashtray, put the ashtray and matches on the table and drew her close to him. They kissed and petted slowly and slowly he unbuttoned her lacy blouse.

When they were naked, they rolled around for a while listening to the sounds of skin touching. She rolled onto her stomach with her arms dangling over the edge of the bed. He rolled gently on top of her, resting himself in the soft, warm crack of her buttocks, and slipped his hands under her to cradle her breasts.

When she was squirming slightly and breathing heavily, he moved into position and worked his way inside. Moved his hips and hands, heavier and heavier, moaning.

Pam screamed, a shrill startled scream. She squirmed and bucked frantically, crying out in agony.

Allan kept pushing, harder and harder, as he came. Make it last, he thought.

She kept squirming and moaning long after Allan was satisfied, but he wanted her to come, too, so he kept on as long as he could, until he collapsed on top of her.

She continued to writhe and cry beneath him.

He tried to stroke her hair, but she was in a rage. He rolled off.

The instant she was free of his weight, Pam leapt up and ran to the kitchen sink, sobbing.

Allan looked down at the mutilated cockroach body on the sheet where she had been. He went to her. She was rubbing her body with a wet washcloth and crying. He took her in his arms.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't know about the cockroach."

She sobbed heavily and held him tighter. "I know," she said, "I know." She paused to snifle. "It was so awful. I couldn't get away." She sobbed some more, but continued. "All of a sudden I could feel it wriggling between my breasts. That's when I screamed." She sniffled again. "I kept trying to get up. One time I got up high enough to see it, but then I fell onto it. I could feel it mash against my chest." She renewed her sobbing.

Allan held her and comforted her. "Poor baby, it's all over now."

Eventually, Allan sat her down and went to clean up the bed. He pulled out all the corners of the bottom sheet, folded one over the bug and rolled the sheet into a ball with the body of the dead cockroach at the centre. This he deposited in a heap near the stairs.

They dined on cookies and milk and later a second course of scrambled eggs. They sat around talking and smoking till very late, when they turned out the light and went wearily to bed. There, they made very, very gentle love and fell asleep.

During the night, something jarred them into half-awakened fear. They touched each other and muttered, thickly, groggily, incomprehensibly, and went back to sleep.

THE ALARM RANG. One of them reached over and shut it off. Both of them knew it was set a quarter or a half an hour fast, so neither of them made an effort to rise.

By this time it was really late, they were running around frantically. Finally, they chased each other up the stairs.

"Wait a minute," Pam said, "I forgot my perfume." She ran back down the stairs.

Allan pushed up on the hatch. It didn't budge. He pushed again harder.

"Hey, I can't get the door open." Puzzlement and caution in his voice.

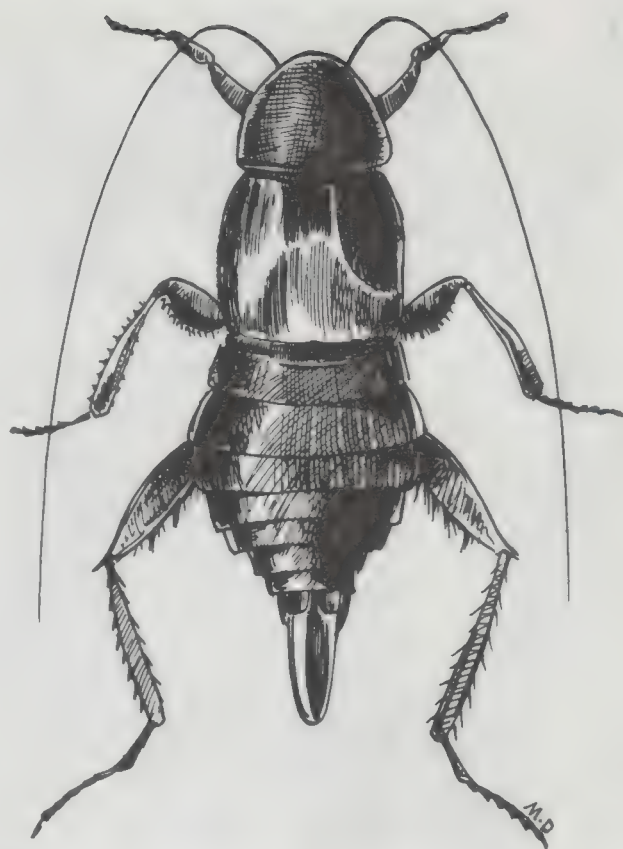
Pam watched his efforts to open the hatch. Unconsciously, she turned her eyes to the dials they had stopped noticing.

"Allan, this meter reads 6,000."

Allan descended a few steps and looked at her.

"Mrs Amis said this meter measures the outside radiation." She wanted to say more, but her voice vanished.

"Do you remember hearing an explosion last night?" he



asked, as if it were the most important question ever asked.

"Yes, it felt like an earthquake."

"I sure wish we had bought that radio."

"I wish we had a window. I just can't believe it."

"I wish we had more food."

Before they could ponder their situation, and long before they could accept the reality of it, a shock wave jolted everything inside the shelter. They clung together.

"What was that?"

"Probably a second wave attack—or, maybe, their doomsday bombs," he replied.

"It still doesn't seem real," she said, distantly.

"Well, it is," he said. "Come on, we've got a lot of stuff to do."

But it didn't take them very long to enumerate their meager supply of rations.

The next day, when the alarm rang, they awoke with a start. Though there was no longer any reason to get up, they were already too hungry to go back to sleep. They spent a long, dull and discomforting day and after that, they no longer set the alarm. There was very little to keep them occupied during their waking hours, so they slept as much as possible.

PAM WOKE FIRST, but lay as still as she could for as long as she could, to forestall the eventual day. Allan woke and did the same until they became aware of each other's wakefulness and were forced to move. She rose first and went to the john. When she returned, she dressed, as usual, in a loose blouse and blue jeans. While Allan was in

the head, she went to the kitchen, set some water on to boil, took a well-used teabag from the refrigerator and dipped it in the boiling water. When the water began to change colour, she squeezed the moisture out of the teabag and returned it to the refrigerator. They breakfasted on this weak tea and their last two cookies. They ate slowly.

"These are the last of the cookies," she said.

"I know."

"Did you sleep well?" she asked, halfheartedly eager for conversation.

"Sure, the hungrier I get, the better I sleep."

Silently, they nibbled at their cookies and sipped their tea. Allan broke the silence.

"You gonna paint today?" he asked casually.

"Yeah," she replied, dully. "You're going to read?"

"Mmmhmm. After I finish this book, I might do a little writing."

Eventually, lethargically, she picked up their teacups and rinsed them in the sink. He sat at the kitchen table and read; she moved to the other end of the room, near the stairs, where she kept her art materials in a large heap on the floor.

The morning passed. The time passed. They waited for one o'clock, when they could eat lunch. As the time approached, their eyes met more frequently as they turned to look at their clock.

For lunch, they ate ice-cream: a hideous fudge-ripple ice-cream that tasted like rubbing alcohol, which they were glad to have.

"Oh, Allan," Pam moaned, "the absolute, dead silence in here is driving me crazy. Do you think we can go up soon?"

"Not until the meter is back to normal," he said calmly and firmly. Subject closed. "Did you finish your painting?"

"Yeah. But it's not very good. I found some old drawings of mine from high school that're much better."

"Maybe you can dig through some of those boxes of shit in the closet and find some interesting stuff. We can redecorate again."

"Yeah, I'll do that."

Their voices had become quiet monotones.

Later, Pam's shrill, but stifled, scream pierced the silence.

"What's the matter?" Allan asked, startled, as he walked towards her.

She was standing now, away from her fear.

"It was a cockroach." Before Allan could deride her for her stupid fear, she continued. "I was looking through an old scrapbook and it jumped out. I wasn't expecting it." She went to him and held him tightly, pressing close to him. "Allan, I'm so afraid."

He knew she wasn't just kvetching about the cockroaches and he held her tighter.

They moved to the bed. He stroked her hair and kissed her lightly, gently, on the mouth and forehead. He began to unbutton her blouse, she finished for him. They stood up and undressed themselves quietly.

Back on the bed, they touched each other languidly and moved scarcely at all. They made love slowly and gently and slowly and gently till Allan finally came, slowly, gently.

Even the small effort of making quiet love tired them. They rested in each other's arms hoping for sleep.

PAM WORKED FRENETICALLY, quietly as possible, whimpering all the while, to herd the scurrying roaches away from her and off her belongings. She had uncovered a horde of them living in a box she was exploring. Suddenly, Allan loomed up behind her, grabbed her shoulders and jerked her harshly from the scene of battle.

"Get out of there," he said, severely, as he pulled her away. "And keep quiet." He poured out the contents of the box and proceeded to stomp on every roach he saw. A few fast and lucky ones managed to scurry to safety under one of the other available piles of rubble.

"You'd better start getting used to them," he said when he had finished, "because we're going to have to start eating them soon" (or each other).

Pam was very silent while she cleaned up the mess.

The day their food was scheduled to run out, they sat very still and hungry in their respective corners of the room. The morning dragged. Finally, Allan, who couldn't see the clock and couldn't stand the suspense, asked, "What time is it?"

Pam looked at the clock and rose, saying nothing.

"What time is it?" he asked more impatiently.

"I don't know," she almost whispered.

"What do you mean?" he asked flatly as he rose.

"It stopped."

"Why?" he demanded on his way over to the bed where she and the clock were. "When was the last time you wound it?"

"I don't remember," she stammered, frightened. "I think yesterday at lunch."

"Stupid bitch."

"I'm sorry."

"What the fuck good does that do!" he screamed at her.

Enraged, he gripped her above the elbows, shook her and threw her onto the bed. Before she could move, he straddled her hips and pushed her shoulders into the mattress. She screamed the few obscenities she knew at him and scratched his arms, ripped his shirt and tried for his face.

He let go her arms and she flayed at him as he removed his shirt and threw it on the floor. She fought him as he tried to unbutton her blouse, so he ripped it open, grabbed her wrists and bent over to bite her nipples, to ravage and caress every part of her with his tongue and teeth.

She stopped struggling and began to push and press her body toward him. He let go of her wrists and held her head while he pushed his tongue deep into her mouth. Her hands worked frantically to unfasten his pants.

He sat up, undid her jeans and pulled them off. Then he stood up on the bed over her and removed his own.

He dropped to his knees and bent to chew her nipples again. She screamed and raked her nails, hard, down his back. She pushed her hips up to him and dug her nails into his buttocks, forcing him down on her.

Once they were locked together, they strangled each other in grips of arms and legs, writhed violently and bit each other savagely for a short time. They came one right after the other.

Thoroughly exhausted, they slept for an unknown period of time.

When they woke, they were hungrier than ever. Slowly, they rose and went to the kitchen and ate their final meal of pot soup and crackers in silence.

"Well, that's that," he said as he finished.

"You know, we really don't need the clock any more. We only used it so we'd know when to eat."

He made no reply, so she continued.

"Allan, please, let's go outside now."

"No."

"We'll starve to death if we stay here."

"And we'll die of radiation if we don't. That's for damn sure. That fucking needle hasn't dropped below six thousand since the bomb."

"Maybe it's broken. I'd rather take my chances out there."

"Well, I wouldn't. Our chances are exactly zero up there."

"Maybe, but they're the same down here. If I have to die, I'd rather do it outside than in this tomb. We don't know what it's like up there; I want to see it. I know I'll die if I stay down here."

"And I know I'll die if we go upstairs."

"You don't have to go. Just let me go."

"The minute we open that hatch, this whole shelter will be contaminated."

"Please, Allan, please."

He rose. "You're getting hysterical," he said. "Shut up." When she didn't, he slapped her. "How many times do we have to go over this before it becomes clear to you that we're staying here?"

ALLAN EMPTIED THE bottle of cockroaches he had captured into the boiling water and cooked it till the bodies became soft and the water turned brown. Then he drained off the liquid and mashed the bodies into a pulp and seasoned it with pepper. He brought the pot and a large spoon to the table and sat across from Pam.

"See? They look just like refried beans."

"I just can't eat that," she replied slowly.

"So don't." He took a small mouthful and swallowed without chewing.

"It's not bad," he said after washing it down with a hearty drink of cold water. He took three more mouthfuls before he vomited. Pam watched him retching and looked away only once to glance furtively at the stairs. When he had finished, she stretched her hand out to him, but he stumbled to the sink to wash his face. She followed.

"Oh, Allan," she sighed, touching him. "Don't you see?"

"Shut up," he said and walked, feebly, to the bed where he flopped, face down and still.

Allan was trying to read, but he could scarcely keep his eyes or mind on the book. He looked around the room. Then at his book. And again around the room. Pam, familiar fixture, was missing.

Not wishing to disturb the stillness, or the faint sound he thought he heard, he rose and walked to the far end of the room. Looking up, he saw her carefully turning the wheel

of the safety lock on the hatch.

Forgetting his weakened body, he bounded up the stairs two at a time, reaching her before she could finish. He grabbed her tightly around the neck and waist and pulled. As her clenched fingers slipped from the wheel, he jerked her free and flung her down the stairs. Then he re-tightened the lock.

He was still in a rage when he turned to walk down the stairs. He wanted to kill her, no, just beat the shit out of her for having nearly killed them both. He found her crumpled on the floor at the bottom of the stairs, her neck hideously twisted, and blood dripping from her nose and head.

He cradled her limp body in his arms, hugged her and carried her to the bed. There, he laid her gently on her back and tried to close her eyes, getting them only half-closed. He stroked her head slowly and kissed her lightly on the lips. The warm blood around her mouth had a pleasant flavour. Slowly, he kissed her face until it was clean.

When he lifted her to remove her blouse, there was a wet, red stain on the pillow where her head had been. With one hand, he held her upright; with the other, he slipped the blouse off her shoulders and, a bit awkwardly, pulled the sleeves off her arms. Carefully, he laid her back down in the same place, and smoothed the hair around her face. Leaning over, he rested his head on her chest, so still and warm and soft, as if nothing had changed. He reached for her breast and stuffed it in his mouth. He sucked it endlessly, harder and harder, and fondled it with his teeth. He chewed it harder and harder, but could not bring himself to chew hard enough to feed his body. Having lost her, he needed her, wanted her, loved her more than ever. His mouth hurt and he forgot about her breast. He noticed his hard-on.

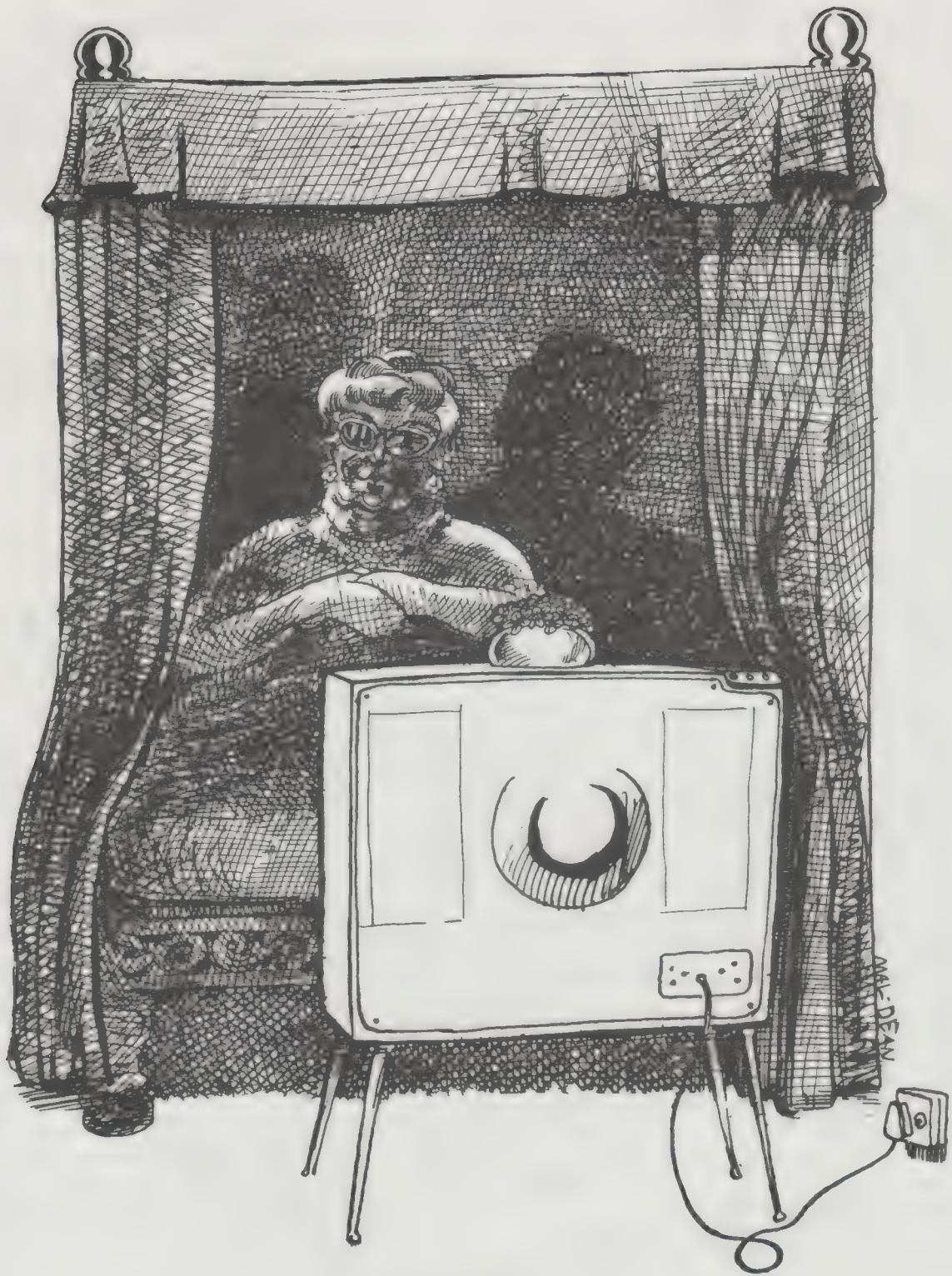
He rose and unhurriedly began to remove his clothing. When he was naked, he looked at her again and reconfirmed his need. He unzipped her jeans, removed them methodically and spread her legs. She did not resist, but lay there passive and still as the first night, wanting him in her quiet way. Smooth, warm skin welcomed him and he entered easily.

He lay still for a while digging the feel of her closeness. Then he began to make soft, slow love to her, just the way she liked. As he moved, her body kept perfect time with his slow, steady rhythm. She followed exactly his every movement as he slowly increased the tempo. They moved together as they had never moved before. Together. He came forever.

And fell asleep.

When he awoke, later, her body was stiff and chilled beside him. Hard and really dead. He rolled out of bed and blindly heaped the bedclothes over it, obscuring it. He took a blanket and a pillow out of one of the cabinets and curled up on the floor in front of the toilet, where he stayed as his stomach shriveled in upon itself, dragging his other organs after it.

He slept and woke fitfully, sometimes noticing the pile of linen on the bed. But there was no food in the kitchen and no need to go to that end of the room. Daily, he felt less and less, either physically or emotionally, about his condition.



Eventually, he noticed a fetid odor. It persisted and demanded his attention. He decided to look at her body once more, just look at it. He knew it would look different—inhuman—a piece of meat. He still felt hunger.

When he drew back the covers for the first time in however long it had been, some of the cockroaches scurried off the bed, but others merely burrowed deeper into the decaying flesh, continuing their feast along the way. He covered it again and went back to his place on the floor and lay down.

AN UNMEASURED MOMENT of time passed before Mrs Amis came to clean up. She had a devil of a time getting rid of the cockroaches and finally had to fumigate before she could run the ad again.

With her new tenants settling in, Mrs Amis could relax once again. Propped up on pillows, under thick blankets in a massive four-poster, she watched the maid depart. And pouring herself a cup of tea, she reached for the remote control and switched on the monitor, leaned back and relaxed. ■

CIRCULARISATION OF CONDENSED CONVENTIONAL STRAIGHT-LINE WORD-IMAGE STRUCTURES (RADIAL-PLANOGRAPHIC CONDENSED WORD- IMAGE STRUCTURES, ROTATION ABOUT A POINT) BY MICHAEL BUTTERWORTH

Take:

I crossed the channel, Dover to Calais, in a motorboat. I had a drink of tea on the way.

Condense:

Dover sea motortea—drink Calais

Take:

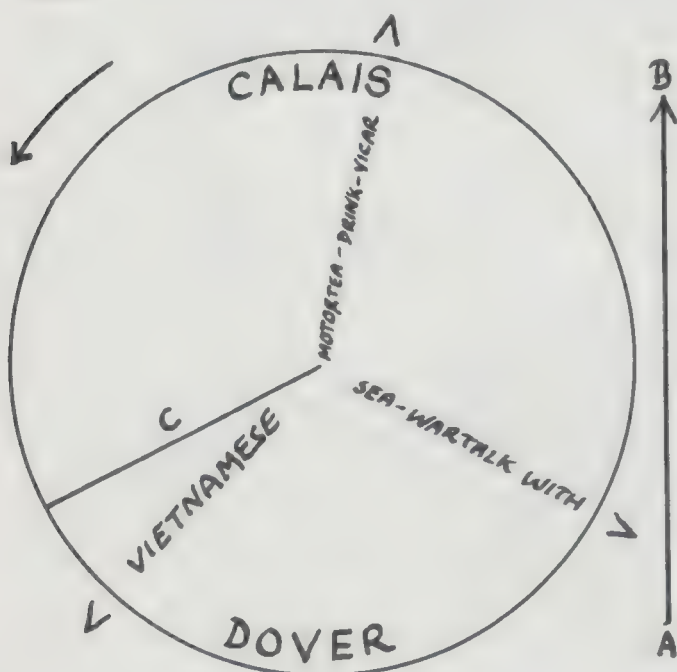
I crossed the channel, Dover to Calais, in a motorboat. I had a talk about the war in Vietnam with a vicar, over a drink of tea.

Condense:

Dover. Vietnamese sea wartalk with motortea—drink vicar. Calais.

Rules For Reading Circularisation Method

- (1) Read Image-bars radially from circle origin outwards towards circle periphery. Read round the circle, beginning at “solid bar” C (marked on diagram).
- (2) Point A (in red) indicates “author’s origin”, or starting point from for conveyance or fulfilment of idea or narrative, to point B which is always the “author’s objective”. In the circle, the author’s origin is DOVER. The author’s objective is CALAIS. A always appears at the bottom of the circle, B always at the top.
- (3) Circle surface area may be printed with blue picture of sea (in this case), or with any other stock subject (land, air, fire, etc.) relative to subject matter in revolution.
- (4) If more than one origin and objective is decided upon by the author to fit a particular subject, then the reader may expect to see a second or a third “frame” (i.e. circle).
- (5) Conversation, if required, is printed separately on the page facing a frame.
- (6) Familiarisation with spontaneous, conscious interpretation of the condensed subject matter, is important if the frames are to be read successfully.



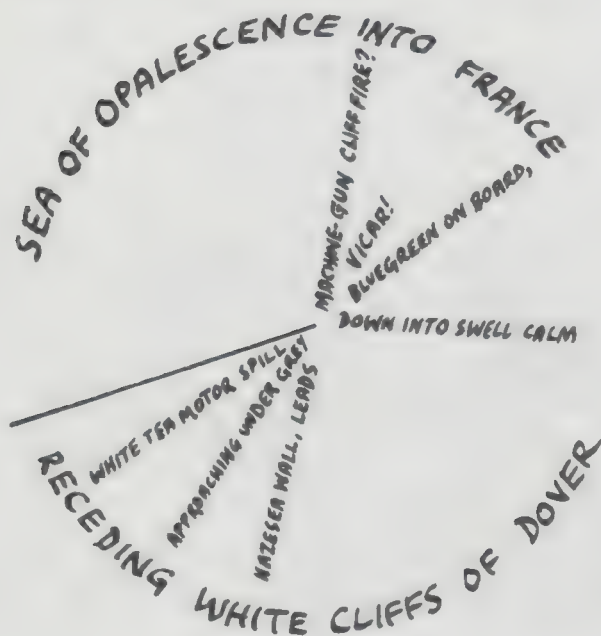
NO TRUCE IN WHITE HOLOCAUSTMAS-TIME
(YEAR OF CROSSING-1967)
by Michael Butterworth

Frame 1



VICAR:
Against background noise of motorboat and sea. War, Vietcong soldiers, civilians, is an Image to be dealt with, not an attempt at facing Reality.
NARRATOR:
Ah, but what's Reality? Who can define that, Vicar?
VICAR:
I...

Frame 2



NARRATOR:
Against background noise of motorboat and sea. Ah, yes Reality! Those white cliffs. Good tea isn't it?
VICAR:
Oops! All over you. This reminds me of a long time ago, on the sea in a small boat. Or was it a book I'd been reading, about a hunch-back who operated a ferry service across the Channel? He used a rowing boat, by the way, and rescued trapped soldiers from the beaches at Dunkirk.
NARRATOR:
I can almost hear machine-gun fire coming from the cliffs. It's almost like Thomas Hardy now...
VICAR:
Reality? We're over the board to phantasy in a minute!
Sound of machine-gun fire in the distance

VICAR:
Reality? In this case a process of... of friendly permutation of first impressions. If soldiers met up with Reality, instead of a false impression their respective Authority's "hatred" cloaks around The Enemy, soldiers would not fight.
NARRATOR:
We'll soon be in Calais. What are you going to do once we get there?
VICAR:
I have a friend...

Frame 3



VICAR:
Against background noise of sea and boat. This is precisely what I mean. They're human now, true Christians, filled with spirit. At other times of the year they fought one another. Can you believe it, seeing them so happy now? Sounds of laughter and merriment coming from the trenches. Christmas in Vietnam. You remember? They did the same thing.
NARRATOR:
At what cost? Look, if only you could, at my remembrances. There is a man...

Frame 4



NARRATOR:

Against background noise of 1st WW machine guns, trench groans, sea and motorboat.

Now you see what I mean about War.

VICAR:

I see pain and suffering. I see no motive, only an exchange of senseless attacks. If men met in the flesh, instead of reading newspapers about one another, as they did last Christmas time, they would soon learn *not* to hate one another.

Because of a humanising element that both sides have in common—a love of Father Christmas, if you like. Image of War, go away back into the clouds.

NARRATOR:

And of War? Isn't War just a *word*? We're getting onto very vapourous ground; here Vicar, finish your tea. Water water everywhere and it's all salt! How I suffer.

Frame 5



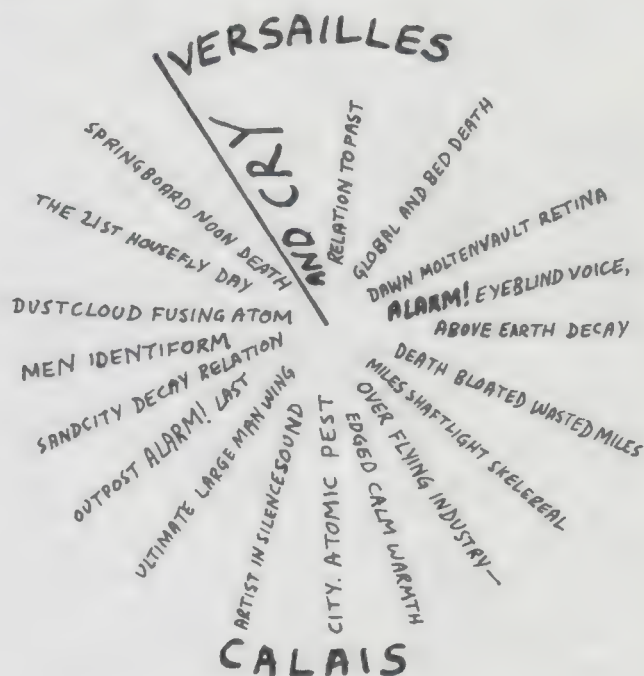
VICAR:

Ah the French coast, clearly at last. Listen to what they say—the white cliffs ten miles behind. *Very loud “rat-tat” of machine-gun in echo chamber.* But there will be no question of post atomic survival. We'll have fought so much hatred to do that. It'll not be a question of slipping across the “lines” to have a mixed party . . . Enemy prejudice—false superboosted hatred Images—won't exist. *Sound of motorboat and sea comes suddenly into the foreground, as if the wind changes.*

VICAR:

Shouting above the noise. I have a friend who runs a church in Versailles . . .

Frame 6



Sound of motorboat and sea. In the distance, bells and cannons from “1812 Overture”. Silence

NOTE AND EFFECTS ON AND OF CIRCULARISATION

by Michael Butterworth

TWIN-SCREEN EFFECT

The radial “spokes” of the straight-line word-image structures, revolving anticlockwise, have led me to term the effect: “radirote”, from “radius” and “rotation”. Radirote plural becomes “radirotii”.

I have called the radirotii of the short passage *NO TRUCE IN WHITE HOLOCAUSTMAS-TIME* as representative of the “Printed Frame Effect”, each radirote being looked upon as a “fixed radirote, or frame”. Each fixed radirote comprises 1 frame, usually depicted without the circle periphery printed-in. By fixed, I mean it is impossible, except in a purely imaginative way, for the Image-bars to revolve through time.

The “Twin-Screen Effect”, on the other hand, is arrived

at by mounting two circular television screens, or similar screens, side by side on a vertically erected platform as in the diagram below. Here, the Image-bars of each radirote, revolve or rotate about the circle's origin, *through time*. The Images would be broadcast as similarly as Images are broadcast on a conventional television screen.

In screen A (a "complete radirote frame" for direct descriptive report), the solid bar C rotates about the circle's origin in *fixation* with the fixed Image-bar rotation, i.e., the same spacing between all bars, as allocated by the designer or author, is maintained during rotation. The viewer reads from the rotating solid bar C, around the circle.

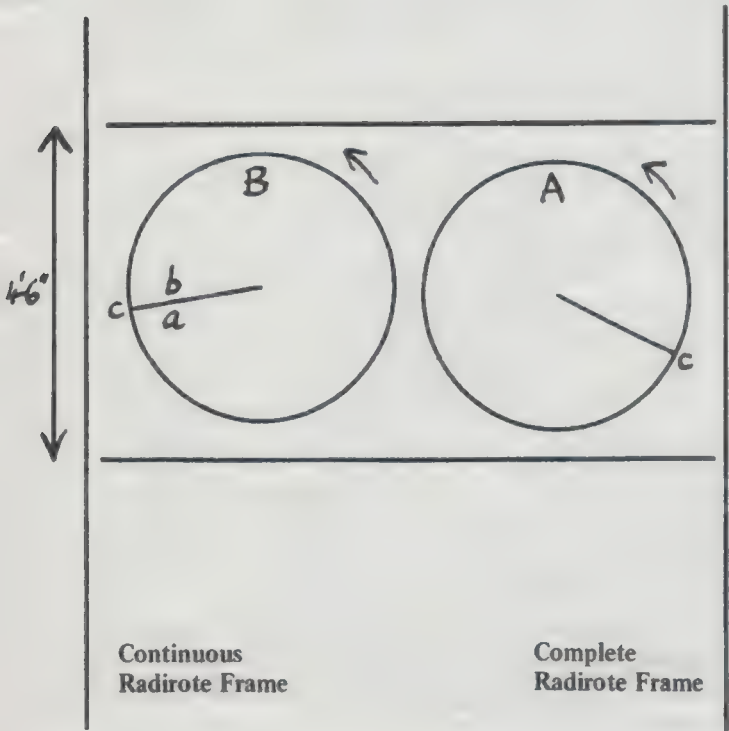
In screen B, the solid bar C does not rotate with the rest of the Image-bars. Instead C occupies a fixed position in relation to the screen. The Image-bars continue to rotate round the origin and go off the screen, appearing to merge into c, at point b in the diagram. Continuous (fresh) material comes onto the screen, appearing to revolve out of c, at point a. Such a radirote I have called a "continuous radirote frame", effective for "visual" observation of speech.

Operating Procedure: A commences bar rotation. B follows suit after time has been allowed for the audience to read the full bar content of A. Both revolve together. B revolves slower than A. When B reaches the end of its continuous effect, both radirotii cease bar rotation, and their images fade. After a pause of a few seconds, a fresh frame begins. A commences rotation, etc.

The viewer glances quickly from screen to screen, absorbing the broadcast. Special, taped sound effects, sometimes necessary for each frame, are required. Viewer clamps a set of padded ear-phones to his head.

It is desirable for the audience to sit at a distance of at least 15 feet from the screens, and to view in the dark, or in dim red lighting.

TWIN-SCREEN EFFECT



BLANK SCREEN EFFECT

Similar in construction to the TWIN-SCREEN EFFECT, but comprised also of a third screen (as large as the screens A and B in the diagram above) which can be called C. C gives neon-glow effect, pulsating coloured light and patterns, or else remains almost totally blank. Its purpose is to give increased perception into the Images presented by the Image-bars, or else to provide an area of lighted screen upon which the viewer may project his own internal Images, according to however the rotating Image-bars have affected him. Screen C could be of possible use to psychologists, as a type of "ink-blot" test. Certain pre-determined word-arrangements could be used on screens A and B. The position C occupies, in relation to the two other screens, completes a "triangle" of circles, with C above A and B.

OTHER EFFECTS

Image-bars could be made to waver or bend—i.e., it is not imperative they remain "straight-line" in formation. Image-bars could also be constituted of words having varying letter-sizes, so that an intense depth-perception into the screen could be achieved. This method takes advantage of the fact that the viewer automatically relates himself with the origin of the circle, no matter what the screen he chooses to view.

What I call the "Original Effect" (not strictly concerned with radii-rotation), takes a similar advantage of automatic autoidentity with the circle's centre. Words (of varying letter-sizes) are made to emerge from the circle's origin on the screen. Their lettering increases in size as they approach the periphery of the circle, and are free to follow whatever patterns and meanings have been given to them by designer or author. The effect is that of a rush of words, appearing as if out of "nothing", toward the viewer. At each rotation of the solid bar they change, and a fresh "frame" is begun.

LONG-TERM SIGNIFICANCE

What is the long-term significance of Circularisation? It was originally devised by myself out of a belief that all processes in Nature (the perpetual deterioration of the Universe) are evolved out of (and make up) an infinite series of circles (or cycles).

An apparatus which is capable of giving the viewer actual "word experience", does not seem to me to be too much of a remote proposition to face. By "word experience" I mean *absolute appreciation of word significance to the viewer*, whereby the viewer becomes so much identified with a word that he virtually "lives in it" for a few moments, or rather "it may live" around him. Such an apparatus would necessarily involve stimulation of certain areas of the brain by electrodes. For instance it is possible, accidentally, for a person taking LSD to have just such "word experience", although whether in fact such a drug as LSD is "perfectly harmless" is debatable, and anyway it is not suitable (in its present structure) for the operation I have in mind. Certainly, I feel, the Circularisation method of reading, in all its forms, is one step towards such an achievement. Using a "word experience" method though could enable children to "learn", in a few short sessions, the amount of data it normally takes a lifetime's study and experience to achieve. There is still a lot more research to be done.

AN EXPERIMENT IN GENOCIDE

WHEN THEY HAD finished with Alberic he was no longer human. His arms and legs were glowing prostheses, interchangeable at will in the manner of a complete tool kit. His reflexes had been modified by the finest neuro-surgery, so that in a fraction of a second the appropriate reaction would occur, far faster than even the most jungle-bred human could contrive. His brain had access to a molecular core store, so that he need forget nothing. His thought processes worked with computer accuracy, conducting simultaneously manifold complex schemes and patterns, effortlessly overlaying and scheduling the different information matrices.

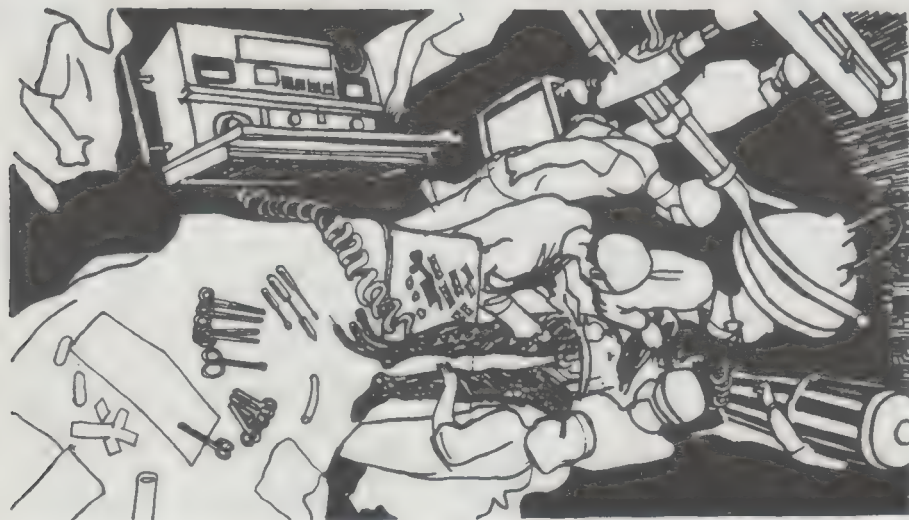
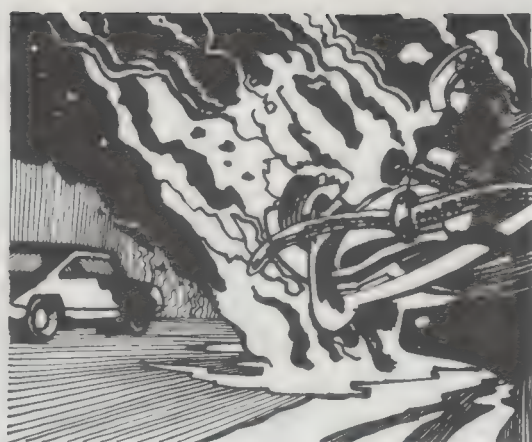
Alberic had one serious weakness. He was a pervert. This was in itself not altogether surprising. He represented, after all, a considerable deviation from the human norm. Nonetheless the surgical indignities to which he had been subjected would seem to have unhinged him. Each day as he wandered at random about the city, travelling in tortuous routes about the monorails and air-cars, he would lose no opportunity to rub, brush, or otherwise bring into contact his genitals with the person of some delightful female, choosing most often the inviting posterior which the lady in question was unable to remove, owing to the over-crowding in the public transport system.

Of course the population of the city had mushroomed alarmingly in the previous two decades. Twenty-five million

souls now lived in the conurbation's thirty teeming levels, and fresh levels were continually under construction. The congestion had become such that private transport was by order the luxury of the privileged few, and indeed a statistical survey would have demonstrated that the incidence of ulcers, heart trouble and spasmodic diseases within this minority rode high above the average.

Traffic accidents were frequent and bloody. Drivers of the monobuses, aircars and hover-vehicles were chosen as much for their manifest or latent misanthropy as for any native skill at manipulating their vehicles. Without a daemon driving those who drove, transport schedules could scarcely be maintained at all. Quite often the pressures upon these individuals would push them over the brink into complete psychopathic degeneration. Most often this would take the form of paranoia, with the resultant damage to the requisite delicate balance; in such cases the vehicles crashed, *were* crashed, deliberately, to the accompaniment of howls of glee—cut short, naturally enough. In other cases schizophrenia would set in, a joyous liberation from necessity—with much the same final result, of course.

It was in one such accident that Alberic had come to grief in the first place. He had always manifested *normal* tendencies up to that time. His fiancée, however, was most unfortunately killed in the crash. The authorities could not officially condone such unfortunate mishaps of course, but it was notable that neither did they exert themselves to



prevent them. Alberic, the lone survivor of the tragedy, had been removed to the hospital which worked, mysteriously, such restorative wonders.

In view of this, it is perhaps surprising that Alberic did not avoid public transport whenever possible. It was, as will be noted, a perilous occupation, and most people were quite willing to avoid it except where essential. Social

visiting had become a rarity, and it was not unusual to refuse an appointment at a handsome salary if this entailed excessive travelling.

Alberic, however, considered himself indestructible. This was a ridiculous point of view: his fleshy middle from which appended those self same genitals whose vicarious favours he dispensed so freely, remained exposed to the

dangers of existence, and he could rely only upon his speed of thought and the quickness of his reactions.

It was these faculties, moreover, which enabled him to sustain himself. His food, he stole. He was, for practicable purposes, unstoppable. More important, he was unidentifiable. His speed of movement and deftness of contrivance defied human witness while his unusual composition, part organism, part prosthesis confused the electronic scanning devices whereby the police had thought to make theft impossible. It was known that a thief was at large. But this thief was shrouded in mystery to such an extent (Alberic's powers were not widely recognised) that superstitious fears were aroused in all but the most hard-bitten. It was an age in which superstition thrived.

Though he was impervious to the elements, for the surgeons had not neglected to provide him with a built-in thermostat, he nonetheless required a corner, a little place to retreat to now and then, to satisfy his meagre requirements of sleep and solitude. His own tiny apartment had been rented off as soon as the landlord had been apprised of the accident. It was automatically assumed that there had been no survivors, for this was almost invariably the case.

Alberic had discovered in the course of his travels a snug little cul-de-sac between two huge blocks on the 23rd level, intended no doubt by the Planners for some vital purpose of storage or machine housing, but somehow and atypically overlooked, for it was not easy of access to those without Alberic's unusual abilities. It was here that he would withdraw himself from the hurly-burly and sleep or digest his frugal meals.

Sometimes he would sing, devising some frail aleatoric melody about the life of the city interspersed with a more sturdy plainchant telling of his own life and fancies. He would sing of the life of a frottage and thief, contrasting his lot with that of My Lord Varadek, King of the Planners.

My Lord Varadek was 90 years old and a very worried man. Neither of these facts would have been evident. It was one of his maxims that a Planner should be acquainted with every facet of the city's life. After all, it would appear that, if allowed to go on unchecked, the population of the city would top 50 million inside 15 years. For this reason it was his habit to travel the city every day, looking for the vital clues which would enable him to come up with a solution.

Naturally enough, he was unwilling to declare his intentions, so that he made a practice of travelling incognito. In this way he hoped to see the life of the city as it truly was, not as it might be presented to him in some false and sycophantic manner. He was a master of disguise, and travelled the levels in the guise of some poor honest citizen.

In memory of his late wife, a sweet child who had perished in one of the worst traffic accidents in living memory, a tragedy that had sent a thousand to their doom, he amused himself now and then by assuming the appearance of a young girl, almond-eyed and demure. It must not be thought that he sought to express any perverse feelings. He was, after all, an old man, and his foibles might perhaps be forgiven.

Unlikely though it might be that any should penetrate his disguise, nonetheless it had been necessary to contrive a

measure of self-protection. Many secrets were keyed into his brain, and the discovery of these might lead to the evacuation or downfall of the city. This was not so unlikely as might seem. Another city, in a warmer clime had all but succumbed to the wiles of a band of necrophiliac psychopaths who had captured the King of the Planners and extracted from his still warm corpse all they needed.

A detonator had been surgically implanted into the base of My Lord Varadek's spine. This could be set off in several ways: in the first instance, as a conscious decision by himself when facing some extremity. Secondly, however, it could be tripped automatically when he was unconscious or dead in the event of any attempt to plunder the contents of his mind. Naturally enough, it was keyed to his neuronics signals alone and could not be set off accidentally.

Alberic knew none of this, and such ideas did not find their way into his songs. Sometimes his powerful brain wondered why he had this restless urge to wander, how he had acquired this oddly satisfying deviation. But he was wise enough to know that speculation about life's mysteries leads only to unhappiness, and he was content to have been saved, to be alive.

One day he had set out much as usual to travel the twisting routes of the city. The yammering of the drills could be heard clearly on this, the topmost level. By craning his neck, he could bring into his line of vision a glimpse of sky, a rare sight this. This put him in a high good humour.

The monobus had begun to fill up now. Intent on his own purposes, Alberic had offered up his seat to an old lady. By choosing his moment carefully he had contrived to place himself right next to a most attractive young girl, who betrayed extreme nervousness in the way she looked about her continually.

This excited Alberic immensely, so that he withheld his attentions while his desires built up to fever pitch. The delightfully curved rump of this young thing moved him near into ecstasy, and he was ready for the consummation, such as it was.

Cautiously he edged forwards. The pressure of numbers had built up so that it was not possible to move forwards or back. Lovingly, caressingly, he rubbed his genitals against the lovely young girl's behind. Surely never would he experience such joy again.

At that moment the transistorised circuits implanted into his nervous system replicated precisely the neuronics wave-lengths of his victim. A signal passed from his genitals to the detonator at the base of the other's spine. The explosion commenced; Alberic and 90 year old Lord Varadek went to their death together, plus a monobus-load of innocent bystanders.

Nor was this all, for the surgeons' cunning had not stopped there. Alberic had been transformed into one enormous amplifier, of itself innocuous, but which now, even as he died, magnified enormously the explosion that emanated from My Lord Varadek's rear.

At accelerating speed the disaster spread outwards, destroying all in its path, splintering into fragments the mighty city. Within two minutes 22 million inhabitants were dead, annihilated as if they had never been. And the city lay in ruins.■

Robert E. Toomey Jr.

pejorative

THE ONE-ARMED man and the dwarf boarded a bus.

They spoke together in what sounded like a foreign language, but in tones so low no one could tell for certain.

One of them carried a briefcase, but later nobody could remember which one it had been. The briefcase was stamped on gold with the initials SES.

The one-armed man and the dwarf took seats to the rear of the bus, below a day-glo advertisement for low-cal vaginal lubricant.

The driver of the bus, knowing full well that eternal vigilance is the price of freedom, and suspecting all of being subversives, kept an eye on the two as he propelled the bus through heavy midtown traffic. A loud ticking sound could be heard from where they sat, possibly emanating from the briefcase.

Somewhere chimes rang out. Horns blared. An early ground fog had been burned off by the sun and the sky was clear. The ticking continued.

Down deep underground the Colonel waited, masturbating himself to Saint-Saens. He was a narrow man with a gorgeously hooked nose like a predatory beat, red-veined

and scimitar-thin. When he spoke to a subordinate, his head moved back and forth, towards and away, and the nose seemed to be fencing with that of his opponent. When he spoke to a superior he stood modestly back, eyes cast down.

His chin curved upwards. It was forever jutting forward, and his lower lip curled away from it, exposing yellowing chitinous teeth. The Colonel thought he looked like a god.

He looked like a Punch, and you could barely fit two fingers between the nose and the chin.

Clocks were chiming all over today. Clocks that had never chimed before. Wristwatches rang like little tinny bells, like crystal goblets tapped by a fingernail. Grains of sand falling through hour glasses made distinct pinging sounds.

In Founder's Park, located in the heart of the city, reports had come in of wild animals tearing innocent people apart. A muscular nanny named Gertrude, leading a two and a half year old baby girl named Pristine by a leash, was set upon by howling wolves and her remains scattered over an entire bowling green. Pristine was heard to have said, "Nice bow-wows."

A superior court judge was found dead, among others, missing only his heart.

All police within the vicinity were killed.

Only the children were spared.

In the main shopping area of the city, traffic had snarled up hopelessly, blocked off by a collapsing bank with a conservative blue and white checkerboard patterned facade of weatherproof high impact plastic. Behind the plastic, soiled red bricks; under the bricks, one branch manager, two tellers, three secretaries, four customers and a psychedelically painted Volkswagen bus.

A wrecking crane was quickly commandeered from a nearby demolition job to help clear the traffic away.

Overhead, something huge with wings that beat thunderously, temporarily eclipsed the sun. There were those who took this to be an omen. Others took it to be an eagle, although eagles had been extinct for some time now.

Down deep underground, the Colonel, resting between bouts of self-indulgence, cheated his way through a few hands of solitaire.

The bumblebee yellow bus with black bands and a long exhaust pipe like a metalgray stinger, was trapped with the one-armed man and the dwarf between a beer truck and an autumn Gold Cadillac.

The driver, eternally vigilant, kept his eyes on them, suspicious because they were the only passengers who had failed to disembark after the bank collapsed.

A parade marched by.

In a quiet convent six miles away, the black and white habits of sixty-nine nuns who had paused in their day's occupations to observe the Angelus bell, suddenly turned a transparent yellow.

A tall, dark, naked man whose body was covered with open sores appeared, bearded and with black curly hair and a case of incipient acne, speaking what the majority thought could only be obscenities in a corrupt alien tongue that two of the nuns later said they recognised as being Hebriac in origin.

Their cases were reviewed in Ecclesiastical Court and the

two nuns were summarily excommunicated and stripped of their habits. Within a week they had founded their own order in which all the old habits were eliminated.

But the convent, which had been evacuated immediately after the apparition, became a tremendous source of tourist revenue for the city, and guided tours were arranged at fifty cents a head, children under twelve and accompanied by an adult admitted free.

Earlier, the one-armed man and the dwarf, whose names were T.S. and Ezra, had removed a manhole cover with a pinchbar and swarmed down the access ladder into the effluent depths.

Both wore black leather trenchcoats and blue berets, heavy whipcord trousers and hunting boots with bowie knife sheaths. The initials SES were embroidered in gothic script over the left breast of each in gold thread. Their faces were covered with WW II Army Surplus gas masks.

Down they went, through tunnels, past drains and catchbasins, one stooping over, the other upright but decidedly warped. Past small drainpipes that dripped yellow and brown waste matter. Stomping rats and other animals with toughly shod feet, deeper and deeper, into the very bowels of the sewage system, and two more left turns into a huge, well-appointed room with a deeply-piled purple carpet and fluorescent lighting.

The room was a lecture hall.

Over the entrance was a neatly lettered sign: SUPREME H.Q. SPEARHEAD ELIMINATION SQUAD.

Beneath that, in smaller boldface print: Only applicants of good moral character need apply. References checked. No homosexuals, please.

There were ranks and files of banked, slatted, wooden schoolhouse chairs facing a speaker's rostrum, behind which was a patched movie screen and crossed flags, half furled. The rostrum was lettered SES and emblazoned with an Oriental-looking symbol depicting a colossal green dragon in the process of gulping down the planet Earth.

It was done in excellent taste.

To the right of the rostrum was a large polished desk, completely bare, reflecting back the strip-lighting. Behind the desk sat the Colonel.

Other than he and the two newcomers, the room was empty.

"I've been expecting you," he said in a modulated soprano, after staring at them steadily for a long, fierce moment with eyes the color of decaying plankton. "Your applications have been duly processed and our Committee of Four have deemed you acceptable. Will you be seated?"

It was an order, and the two were quick to obey, taking chairs up front.

"You will have to torture, maim and kill," the Colonel said, pressing the tips of his fingers together. "No atrocity can be considered too great, no life too sacred, no act too evil. Torture, maim and kill. The balance of terror must be maintained. Are you prepared to do such things?"

The one-armed man nodded and the dwarf, in a voice like that of a trained mynah bird, said, "May I smoke a cigarette?"

The Colonel seemed to consider this very carefully. From somewhere out of sight a scream sounded, long and hideous and feminine, as of a woman in horrible agony. A

smile scraped back the Colonel's lips and his nose and chin tapped lightly together.

The parade wove in and out among the cars, colors flashing, tubas sounding, batons twirling, the parade stopped at cars and hauled the passengers and drivers out and handed them streamers and candy and melting ice cream and dressed them in rainbow uniforms and marched them away.

"It has come to our attention," the Colonel said to the dwarf, "that you have been known to use drugs." He leaned forward across the desk, elbows sliding over the polished surface. "Is that—ah—cigarette by any chance—doped?"

Ezra, the dwarf, shook his head nervously and T.S. edged away from him as far as he could without actually moving to another chair.

The room was tense.

Then the Colonel nodded benignly, and the dwarf sighed and lit up. He was unable to find an ashtray for the burnt match and, holding the pocket open with one hand, flicked the ashes in there as well.

"Dope is a great evil," the Colonel said. "It saps the will. To kill and maim and torture, your mind must above all be clear and unclouded, your purpose always uppermost in your thoughts. Do you understand?"

Nod.

Nod.

Traffic was finally diverted away from the collapsed building. Detours were set up and excavation procedures to dig out the dead and damaged were arranged. Local and national television stations preempted regularly scheduled programming to bring on-the-spot coverage of the event.

The parade had vanished.

At the same time an appeal went out for city hunters to meet at Founder's Park to help clear out the wild animals. Thousands responded and dozens were killed or wounded in unfortunate hunting accidents.

The city bus with its increasingly suspicious driver and its two passengers headed swiftly towards an outlying area of town. It did not stop for red lights. The police department, with the exception of the Meter Maids who were still tagging parking violators, was tied up elsewhere, trying desperately to stem the tide of crimes of violence, the sudden rash of lootings and burnings that was taking the city by storm.

"You must obey your orders without pause, without question," the Colonel said. "And I will tell you why: because we are working for the Greater Good of Mankind. Any questions?"

It was a dare.

T.S. shook his head, puffed deeply on his cigarette and flicked the ash into his pocket. Ezra saluted with his stump and said, "No questions, sir!" in a snappy military voice.

"You may at first," the Colonel went on, "find it difficult to understand the reasons for our various activities. As time goes on, these reasons will become no clearer, but you will learn to accept them. I'm not here to deliver threats, but if you should ever fail in your assignments, should your sense of purpose waver even momentarily, you will be destroyed most painfully."

As if on cue, his statement was punctuated by another horrid scream.

"And now," said the Colonel, rising, "I would like very much to show you something."

Thick billows of oily black smoke were rising from certain parts of the city now.

A cock crowed thrice.

People wondered whether or not something had Gone Wrong somewhere. Strange happenings and senseless violence had been taking place, and all the clocks, still chiming, were frozen at noon.

A black chicken was found on the steps of City Hall, its throat slit. In his office on the third floor, the Mayor was discovered with a stake through his heart, an apple jammed into his mouth.

Federal agencies moved swiftly in to declare martial law and to clamp down on coverage by the news media.

The sky had gone a bilious green and the sun was changing colors. In places cracks were appearing in the earth and swallowing people and vehicles whole. Telephone lines had been cut. Throughout the city milk had curdled and a rumor was spreading like wildfire that the water filtration system at the reservoir had ceased to function.

But, as yet, nobody was terribly worried. The consensus of opinion had it that someone, probably the government, would step in and nip this problem, whatever it was, in the bud. The Teamsters' Union, in an unprecedented gesture of goodwill, suspended their current six months' strike by acclamation and offered to help in any way they could.

The governor received an anonymous telephone call from Buenos Aires.

The bus tore on through the city.

"Where is he taking us, Ezra?" asked T.S.

"I don't know."

"Do you think he's on to us?"

"If he is, it's tough shit, Ezra."

The Colonel led them through dim, dank passageways of mouldy moss covered concrete.

"The cause of freedom," he said, his voice echoing in the confined space, "is best served by blind, unswerving obedience. We have researched this carefully, and have learned that while an army may travel very well on its stomach, it may NOT travel on its mind. Severe penalties for minor infractions tend to keep infractions from happening. It also cuts down on repeaters. In here, gentlemen."

In here was a small room labelled DISCIPLINARY SECTION. The ceiling and three of the walls were covered with a latticed webwork of pipes. The room was intolerably hot.

A naked woman, manacled spreadeagled against the pipes, was being ravaged unmercifully by a gigantic dildo. The pipes gave off visible vapours of steam.

The dildo was wielded by a huge, powerfully built naked man whose body glistened with sweat or oil. His head was covered with a black hood. It must have been hell in there.

Blood poured from the woman's bodily orifices. Every time the dildo went in, the woman, about twenty-four years of age and quite beautiful, would shrink away from it. Her flesh sizzled audibly as she slammed back against the pipes, then bounced away from them only to be agonisingly impaled again. Each time this happened she would scream.

The Colonel stood with his hands in his pockets. "My eldest daughter," he said. "Lovely, is she not?"

His voice became hard. "Family considerations have no place in our work. We are waging a holy war against the forces of evil. She made her bed and now she must lie on it." He gave vent to a suppressed groan and a spot of dampness appeared on his trousers.

The girl screamed again and lost consciousness. The masked man slapped her back and forth across the face with the head of the dildo until she opened her eyes, and the agony began anew.

"I hope you can take the sight of this," the Colonel said. "We have no place for weak sisters in this organisation."

The dwarf lighted another cigarette and said, "She is obviously getting exactly what she deserves." His expression, around the cigarette, was perfectly blank.

The one-armed man said, "I agree completely."

"Good," said the Colonel, leaning his scimitar nose very close. His breath was sickening, the odor of carrion rotting. "Follow me back and I'll give you two your first assignment. It's been decided that you'll work best as a team."

Before he left he gave the girl a fatherly peck on the navel.

The Colonel spoke to them together once more and showed them slides. Then he spoke to them separately, explaining to them that they were being teamed to keep an eye on each other. He told Ezra that T.S. seemed insincere in his dedication. He told T.S. that Ezra might not to be trusted. If either of them could bring proof of this to him, they would be suitably rewarded and advanced in rank.

Neither was to tell the other of the Colonel's suspicions.

Neither did.

Each watched the other when the other wasn't looking.

The bus reached the outskirts of town and stopped.

The driver reached into his glove compartment and came out with a large calibre pistol.

"All right, you guys," he said. "The game is up."

He pointed the pistol and T.S. and Ezra pointed at each other and spoke in tandem.

"He did it!"

"It was him!"

"You're a liar!"

"You're a known deviate!"

"You're a Klu Kluxer!"

"You're a John Bircher!"

"You're a Republican!"

"You're a motherfucker!"

"You're a cocksucker!"

"You're a lousy lover!"

"Who told you that?"

"Your mother!"

"My mother is dead!"

"You're a necrophile, too!"

The driver pumped out six shots, three apiece, into their bodies.

The ticking sound stopped.

The bus and an area of twenty-seven square miles surrounding it went up in a boiling roiling blinding blazing magical mushrooming cloud.

And shortly a wind came up. ■

IN OUR PREVIOUS ISSUE THIS PARTICULAR PAGE OF BRIAN W. ALDISS'S "THE FIRMAMENT THEOREM" WAS WRONGLY POSITIONED. WE REPRINT IT AS IT SHOULD HAVE APPEARED.

herself to smile. A rather artificial smile. Almost as if she were pretending to be natural on TV.

RELATIVITY—THE WAY VAN VOGT USED TO TELL IT

HIS HIGH HAD disintegrated, leaving him cold and mean. The taxi bounced endlessly on out of Montevideo, northwards. Nothing but road and beach, unwholesome in sunlight. Even the child-prostitutes had gone. He tried to think of the forthcoming meeting of Populist world-leaders in Manaus, but all that came was a slow clockwork orange and the smell of duryan fruit dropping from the duryan tree. He wanted to get back to Burma. The Munch aura was less strong there. Very.

"How long does this beach go on?" he asked Oliphant, irritably.

"Hundreds of miles of beach. Right the way from Montevideo to the border. And the tide never goes out." He yelled to the driver to stop.

The engine died. The tedium of planetary waves, slogging it across from Africa, where everything had begun and would end, according to the oldest and the latest prognostications.

Oliphant pointed ahead.

The beach was broken by a field of blue, red, and white flowers as far as the eye could see. The flowers made startling contrast to the blotting paper hues of ocean and forest.

"That's the power of the Populist movement. One day, the people are going to inherit!"

"Come on, that's an old Jesus joke! You didn't drag me all the way out here to crack that one." He groped for the bottle of local whisky. After pot, what? "The people have always been going to inherit."

"Yeah. But now they're going to inherit next year—with your assistance. The Populist leaders will trust you, if you can find it in you to trust them. How do you like the field of flowers?"

Grudgingly, "Aesthetics is an Old Wave Thing, isn't it? But okay, it's beautiful. Pretty fucking beautiful."

"Let's walk then."

They trudged over the blue, red, and white field, up to the ankles in old newsprint. Montez followed behind, cuddling the machine gun.

"Don't tell me," he said. But Oliphant told him.

"This all was Navarro's idea—the Dutch leader. Elementary lesson in transmutation, he calls it, for cynics with no trust in people-in-the-mass." He scooped up a torn page. In primary colours, Dagwood made a giant sandwich and was biffed by his wife for including her purgatives in it. "See all this field of flowers, so-called—it took you in from the road? You really believed it was flowers? It's all old Yank comicbooks, 'Superman', 'Astounding', 'Flash Gordon', and dozens of others, all torn up here. The literature of the people. Becomes the most beautiful thing you ever saw. Miles of beautiful thing."

Montez had grabbed up a page, fell to his knees dropping the gun, hot to find what happened to Steve Canyon.

"That representative of the people would rather have the flowers reconstituted," he said, jerking a thumb at Montez.

Back at the car again, taking a slug from the Old Lord bottle, he stared back at the amazing beach. It looked like blue, white, and red flowers again. Only now he didn't care for the sight.

Switching his mind from the immediate confrontation, he began to consider Navarro's character in the light of this new revelation. The man was far from being a plodding literal-minded quasi-intellectual like Oliphant (real name Olbai Gulbai Phant) and some of the other nationals. Maybe that was because he was—as his many enemies claimed—raving mad.

He was wiping the sweat from his brow and taking another slug when Montez loomed up. In his lapel was a Jan Palach badge.

"So, Meester, 'ow you like Souze America, eh?"

"Just great. Makes me realise I really am European, and there are such things as those mythical animals, Europeans!"

As if in confirmation of his words, the thought came to him that it was time to return to the advertising jag. Oh Death where is thy sting with a Mexican Saddle.

EVERYTHING OR NOTHING IS WORTH TELEVISION

THEY CROWDED INTO a small bar for a breather. The few deadbeats there stared at them. They acted normally to throw off suspicion. Von Tubb bought a packet of Mexican Saddle. Grotti Cruziero drank a cachaca. Bulmer-Lytton ventured into the urinal and scrawled SILVER IS THE COLOUR WE GENERALLY CALL WINGS on the wall. In his own peculiar dialect, it was a vivid insult. Carleton Greene read a paperback called 'Buggering Gutenberg Museum (Mainz) Sport Glitter'. Yvonne ran her hand over Jerry's chest.

"Let's go back—death alarms me almost as much as life!"

"Shall I give you a Life Message?"

"Which one's that?"

"There's really only one: Be superb!" He ran his fingers through her hair. It was stiff with lacquer. He had forgotten she was three-quarters Negro.

Bulmer-Lytton emerged, zipping his corrupt flies.

"Okay, no bullshit. Orange very strong. Yes, no, daylight, Elizabeth. The fingers of the hand, good, yes. Very good, very strong."

"He intimates he had a good piss," interpreted von Tubb.

"Let's go," Jerry said. He slipped on his Robert Graves mask. The others did likewise.

They crossed a main thoroughfare, alarmingly full of Volkswagens, and dived down another alley. At the far end of it, the opera house loomed.

They emerged under trees, walked cautiously round one side of the great square in which the building stood. It still looked splendid, worthy of a Patti, a Pavlova, its golden dome shining in the muzzy equatorial sun. Under a tree, mules crapped and crepuscular dogs fainted; Jerry was glad about that—he had been thinking of Graham Greene.

He stepped boldly into the open. There were cops about, big black truculent men with high boots and long truncheons. They paid attention only to the girls who

BOOKS

& COMMENT

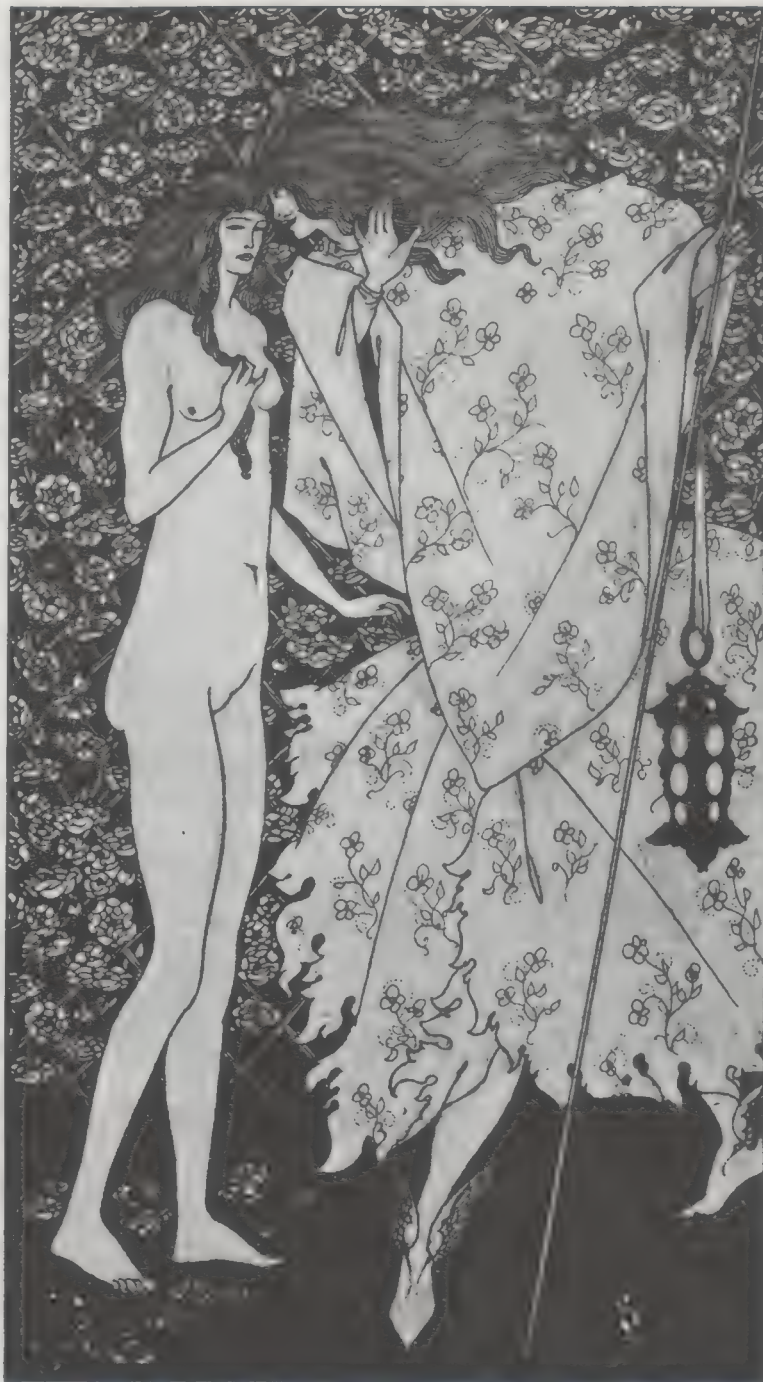
Kenneth Coutts-Smith: *Terrible Biological Haste*

Black and White, a portrait of Aubrey Beardsley, by Brigid Brophy, Jonathan Cape, 21s.

The Collected Drawings of Aubrey Beardsley, edited by Bruce S. Harris, Crescent Books Inc., New York, distributed in the U.K. by Bailey Bros. & Swinfen Ltd., 32s.

NOT MERELY IN fantasies, social, political, manipulated or otherwise, Beardsley can now be understood to be in some ways in actuality what organised society set up Rupert Brooke to represent. There was, in his character, as William Rothenstein said, "... something harsh, too sharply defined in his nature—like something seen under an arc lamp. His understanding was remarkable; his mind was agate-like, almost too polished, in its sparkling hardness; but there was that in his nature which made him an affectionate and generous friend... one was always aware of the eager, feverish brilliance of the consumptive, in haste to absorb as much of life as he could in the brief space he instinctively knew was his sorrowful portion. Poor Aubrey! He was a tragic figure. It was as though the gods had said, "Only four years more will be allowed you; but in those four years, you shall experience what others take forty years to learn".¹

Surely he obeyed Pater's dictum (as perhaps indeed all of us do briefly at one point of our adolescence but permitting it so soon to be overlaid with the dross of experience and expedience); yet one must wonder if this is a type of personality that is possible today. Is this loss the price we pay for a more civilised and rational



The Repentance of Mrs. ... (1894)

environment, the watering down of neurosis; but also with it the dilution of something else more valuable? Certainly James Dean, and in a slightly different way Marilyn, "burned with a gem-like flame", but they were products of a conveyor-belt of dreams, the automated assembly-line of fantasy. It is possible that the nearest equivalent within our immediate and remembered past was the ravaged yet gentle figure of the painter Johnny Minton, stepping, as he did, gently, yet fastidiously, and in a totally committed manner, through the *demi-monde* of the fifties, illuminating with

a specific innocence that was similar to that of Beardsley's, what was arguably the most dissociated decade of the contemporary era, poised uncomfortably between a society that we are currently in the process of sloughing off and the problematic alternative one that we have not yet begun to clearly envisage.

"Live (love) now: die sooner or later," stated Brigid Brophy in the opening words of her shortish but penetrating essay, "... that, classically, is the purport of lyrical art. Aubrey Beardsley was above all a lyrical artist—one who was pounded

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and buckled into an ironist by the pressure of knowing, which he did virtually from the outset, that for him death would not be later but sooner."

Right from the first six lines, Miss Brophy has struck plumb into the central core of Beardsley's work, into his curious and specific obsessional orientation. It is indicative that she immediately notes, as perhaps only a novelist is able to, possessing a more essential awareness of psychological motivation than does the average art-historian, that Beardsley was an ironist, and one standing upon the only platform thinkable to a man in his position who would yet remain a sympathetic and tender human being (refusing either self-pity or indulgence)—that of the stoic. To fully emphasise this, it is necessary to quote in full her following, second, paragraph.

"In his terrible, biological haste, he was first an infant prodigy and then a prodigious worker—though in a delicate social gesture that would suit one of his marked pierrots, he disguised his hard work in evening dress and sophistication. He died of consumption in 1898, when he was twenty-five. He must be—as well as, simply, a very great artist—the most intensely erotic artist in the world. But he is an erotic artist for whom Cupid himself can prefigure death. In one of his decorations Beardsley drew to his own sinister 'Ballad of a Barber', a sonsy, callipygian, wing-flirting amoretto comes flouncing along in profile silhouette, like a boy tart on the beat. This beat, however, is also a march to the scaffold and a road to Calvary. Beardsley's Cupid is shouldering not quiver and arrows but gallows and noose."

Doomed as he was by the bacillic imperatives of his illness, to sexual frustration and death, the febrile imagination particular to the tubercular fixated upon the erotic. It was not so much that he transcended masturbation, but that he elevated it. As Jane Percival has remarked, his "... private dreams publicly displayed disturb our common hypocrisy".² It is not so surprising that Beardsley in his specific medical condition should seek defence behind masks, motley, ritual and gesture. Miss Brophy emphasises this, and describes his instinctive approach to an "anonymous sexual contact", and draws a comparison with his fellow consumptive, Watteau.

There is a curious *modernness* of Beardsley's work which goes beyond the superficial cult of his recent "revival", of the acres and acres of rather bad Beardsley-type "psychedelic" posters and illustrations in IT and OZ. Brian Read, who organised the large Victoria and Albert Museum

exhibition some years ago, and who has written perhaps more penetratingly about him than anyone else, has commented upon certain strip-cartoon elements in his work—the "rays" indicating an inflamed pimple on the overblown penis of one of the unfortunate "Lysistrata" gentlemen, or the glittering diamond shirt stud of the impresario Augustus Harris. Brigid Brophy also explores these elements in the drawings, describing them as the "pure language of *Comic-Cuts*", as well as detailing what may be called the "genital landscape" and what the author herself describes as the "embryo's eye-view", maintaining that "many of Beardsley's monsters represent himself".

MISS BROPHY HAS brought all her feelings for character, and specifically her feeling for character in a state of sexual *extremis*, to bear. The great value of this approach is that it brings the artist alive as a human individual; unlike conventional art-history, and specifically the Courtauld variety, the man takes ascendancy over the work. Art, after all, is a specific expression of the human condition and not the other way round. Brigid Brophy understands this, and it is her exercise in phenomenology (though I guess she might reject the term) that makes this book important. Written with stylistic sensitivity, she nevertheless does occasionally allow herself to be carried away inexplicably into some awful puns. I don't believe I shall ever quite forgive her the following, when, in describing the recent Beardsley cult, she says that the artist was "... wafted to the centre of fashion in the zephyrs—indeed the Zefferelli—of the *art-nouveau* revival". Really, Brigid!

Despite such quibbles, I cannot praise this book enough; and it is logical that the author of *Black Ship to Hell* should illuminate for us the dark side of this extraordinary personality, a "black" vision that would seem to have been made bearable only through a sort of desperate and ironic flippancy. I have already quoted the opening words of her book—so I shall conclude by quoting the final sentences. "His rococo compositions," she writes, "culminate in his lethal *Barber*, whose mindless, inexorable face is the face of a clock, surmounted and surrounded by a hair-do coiled into the outline of a French gilt timepiece. The barber clipping the princess's hair—and cutting her life—is Time clipping Cupid's (and Beardsley's) wings. Time was Beardsley's executioner.

"And likewise with the culmination of his baroque metaphors of greed. In the initial 'M' for the *Volpone* series, the

hungry child is surrounded by breasts that cannot feed. In the initial 'S', Beardsley confesses that he is destined not to consume but to be consumed. He has drawn the bird of death itself swooping on him, hungry to peck out not his liver but his lights. And in a last drag gesture of defiant inappropriateness, Beardsley draped the creature in one of his flying phallic chandelier-tassles and set a dowager's tiara of orient pearls on its horrid brow."



Initial Letter V (Column) to *Volpone* (1898)

The other Beardsley book under review is altogether a different kettle of fetishes (if I may myself be permitted a return pun). This is a bit of band-waggon jumping with a vengeance—a somewhat belated leap onto the Beardsley carousel—an act of cashing-in, in short. Unlike the Jonathan Cape book (the quality of whose illustrations, by the way, is excellent) it is very badly printed. So fuzzy and so blotchy, indeed, are some of the illustrations that it seems obvious that blocks have been made from previous reproductions and not from the originals. Purporting to be the "collected" drawings, it is far from complete. The V. and A. show (itself not complete, obviously)—though of course also comprising works by other allied artists as well as MSS and memorabilia—consisted of 611 items. The American volume offers us some 180 drawings, and this is padded out by the inclusion of a selection of what are known as the "Nicols" drawings, some remarkably transparent fakes that appeared in New York around 1919.

It is the text, however, that is the give-away. *Aubrey Beardsley: an Appreciation*, by Arthur Symons, is a much re-published essay of the period, and Aymer Vallance's *catalogue raisonne* was first printed in 1897 and revised in 1908. This last, claimed by the editor, Bruce Harris, as the "complete" catalogue compiled by Vallance and "revised by Beardsley himself" was superseded by the

exhaustive catalogue of A. E. Gallatin published by the Grolier Club in 1945. Given the very cheap standards of printing, and facing the paucity of the text, not one word of which is this side of the Yellow Book, the present reviewer finds himself wondering whether the material presented is now no longer covered by copyright.

Although it is not within the specific brief of this article, I would like to mention a recent and illuminating essay on Beardsley. Though buried in a magazine of limited circulation, it would appear to be of interest to anyone seriously concerned with this artist. Writing in the *Journal of the British Society of Aesthetics* last October, under the title "Who Overlooks the Fat Woman" Gerald H. Fisher notes the interplay of optical illusions and ambiguous images in some of Beardsley's work, and following up the frequent *double entendres* evident in many drawings, such as the depiction of Whistler as a satyr or Beerbohm as a foetal infant, he points out that there are "expressions of conflict and duality" not yet fully explored. Fisher's essay underlines the fragmentation of personality, the interconnecting osmosis between auto-erotic dream and the inexorable reality of the phthysical that Brigid Brophy so eloquently presents.

- (1) Quoted by Brocard Sewell in *THE AYLESFORD REVIEW*, Autumn 1966, an issue devoted entirely to the work of Aubrey Beardsley.
- (2) Jane Percival, *Notes on the Beardsley Exhibition*, *THE AYLESFORD REVIEW*.

R. G. Meadley: Fourteen Shillings Worth of Grass

THE HISTORY OF Germany over the last 45 years is prone to be viewed with an histrionic exaggeration either of self-accusation or self-righteousness—although it is doubtful whether the power struggles, persecutions and war games of Nazism were any more foolish or horrific than comparable past or contemporary events. It is this period that Gunter Grass traverses once again in his newly available third novel, *Dog Years* (Penguin, 10s.), but Grass, thankfully, spares us another trip round the museum of mutual atrocities: not to

evade them, but because he knows we know what happened and, it not being his task to resurgent old headlines, he intends to use our knowledge to look deeper into the nature of the times.

His characterisation is, as always, baroque and conceived on the grand scale; his elaborate and surreal characters moving easily within the rococo convolutions of his imagery—Amsel,



Gunter Grass

half-Jew, with his obsessional armies of mechanical scarecrows; Walter Matern, drifting pugilistically from cause to cause, finally failing to exact his revenge on Heidegger, the philosopher who offers only an abstracted Nothing; Dr Brunies, scratting for gneiss and brewing secret fudge in the midnight forest, dying in a concentration camp for stealing sweets (this being one of the many incidents in *Dog Years* that dovetails with events in Grass's earlier novels, *The Tin Drum* and *Cat And Mouse*).

The "great events" of the time appear only tangentially as they affect the lives of the characters—"Two days later the war began in Danzig, in Langfuhr, and in other localities as well". Many are represented imagistically, presented for the reader's recognition—taken almost too much for granted perhaps for a foreign audience—but the statement within this approach is obvious: that life for most people goes on as usual until the effects of these events are materially imposed on them in the form of bombs or food shortages. Even when their petty criminals are shipped off to concentration camps, most people don't want to know.

Grass's power, in a time when most novels are partial—merely unscreened film scenarios or disguised TV serials, plots-with-dialogue—is that masterly control of style and of the bizarre that he first sprang on us in *The Tin Drum*. Constantly mobile and refaceted images demand continual reappraisal of each subject. Grass is a writer of

huge books, with all the skill and wit that is required to entice his readers through the enormity of his vision. He conceives on the grand scale and presents us with not only a narrative of events but with intimations of the total scope of their ethos and a deep sense of history that enables us to see the brutal posturings of the Nazis with a less hysterical perspective. Added to which, he inverts that scale and presents the real interests of the people as larger and more pertinent than the intruding international developments. Using the baroque in this manner, *Dog Years* displays the possibilities of what we have been taught to think of as trivial.

Beside *Dog Years* a collection of his poems, *Poems Of Gunter Grass* (Penguin Modern European Poets, 4s.), does not seem satisfying. It is arguable whether poetry ever succeeds in translation, and certainly one feels that the finesse of Grass's technique, of which there is some intimation, is largely lost here. Perhaps that is inevitable. But the poems do not satisfy in another way: they are not bad, though there seems little to distinguish them; they are too small. Alongside the massive genius of his novels, they appear trivial. In one of the *New Poems*, *Don't Turn Around*, he writes:

*Don't drink from the sea,
the sea tastes of more sea.
Whoever drinks from the sea
henceforth feels
a thirst only for oceans.*

Which is how one feels faced with his poems. It isn't just that they are not what one has come to expect—*Dog Years* being an altogether different type of novel from *The Tin Drum*—but that they are not worthy of his ability. They trace a fairly common development through a tedious surrealism to a nicely polished and concise contemporary style, but there is nothing about them to make you flip or scream or leap about with startled delight. Poetry from Grass should be darker, larger and more brilliant than this. These are nicely turned lyrics, like much contemporary poetry, but they are nothing to go out of your way for.

Penguin books are usually remarkable for the wit and pertinacity of their introductory essays, which enable the reader to understand the nature, stance and frame of reference of the featured author. However, the introduction to this volume is neither interesting nor particularly useful. Mr Hamburger writes a tasteless and drably textured prose, inadequately spiced with silly superlatives and served without a single satisfying shred of onion. There are better four shillings' worth about.

Joyce Churchill: Paperbag

THE TROUBLE WITH predictive fiction is that it dates so quickly, particularly in the area of social values. First published in 1958, Edmund Cooper's *Deadly Image* (Ballantine, 75 cents) is a prime example of this "obsolete future" effect.

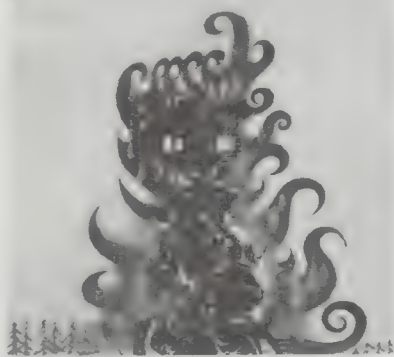
Markham, a refrigeration engineer deep-frozen when the first volley of WW III scores a near miss on an underground storage unit, is resurrected by the android doctors of 2113.

Ballantine Science Fiction 75c 015/6

decision at doona

anne mccaffrey

It was a perfect planet—except for humans!



He finds a Britain split into three factions: the android technicians and administrators who have taken over the hard graft; the human sybarites; and a small body of rebels, the Runners, who oppose mankind's voluntary abandonment of the right to guide his own future. It is—of course—something of a crime for a human to be unhappy with his lot; dissonant elements, when caught, are subjected to deep-level psychiatric treatment. Markham joins the Runners, shapes them into a coherent revolutionary force and with the help of his personal android upsets the status quo. The androids turn out to be making a power-bid of their own, and a minor war ensues.

This is a good sound pedestrian idea, with characterisations and techniques firmly in the Wyndham/Christopher mould. But Cooper's vision of decadence would bore the average potato: there's something sadly farcical about the idea that in two hundred years time people will have found nothing naughtier to do

than drink alcohol, watch cabarets, and—yes—have sex. On present showing, that stage was reached about five years before he wrote the book.

Anne McCaffrey, previously playing at Lords And Ladies with *Restoree*, has turned to Happy Families for the inspiration of *Decision At Doona* (Ballantine, 75 cents):

"You probably won't remember me," Ken began tentatively, disconcerted by the apprehensive rigidity of the young body . . .

"You're supposed to be my father. They said they were turning me over to you as soon as they landed," said a defiant voice.

The dead silence that followed was pregnant with childish challenge.

As is everything subsequent to the meeting of handsome pioneer Ken Reeve and his wild young son Todd. The Reeve family find it hard going on the planet *Doona* when they come up against the advanced but lovable race of *Hrrubans*, cat-people with an engagingly paternal air. The West was never so fraught with danger and excitement! But strangely enough it is the badly behaved Todd who saves the day, despite the antics that have made a nervous wreck of Pat, Ken's pretty young wife. Yes tweaking the tails of cat-people is just one of the endearing ways in which Man can spread sweetness down the lonely light years!

Frankly, this novel deserves a prize of some sort: if Robert Heinlein is the Ayn Rand of science-fiction, Miss McCaffrey must surely be its Enid Blyton. Her conflicts are ersatz and petty, her characters the most trivial of stereotypes, and the whole book is permeated with an odour of playroom niceness.

Michael Frayn's satire *The Tin Men* (Ace Books, 60 cents) is hailed by an optimistic blurb (which, along with a large number of quotes from heavy periodicals, must constitute the most dynamic attempt yet to sell the Ace reader something he has no earthly use for) as the *Catch 22* of the computer age. While not making it that far, it's still a very funny book.

There isn't much of a plot, just a catalogue of the slapstick attempts of the William Morris Institute researchers to automate everything from ethics to sport: and this looseness of construction enables Frayn to lampoon virtually every facet of contemporary communication, dealing as he does so half a dozen probably accidental but incredibly comic death blows to the feasibility of McLuhan's global village. The best way of reviewing it is merely to quote this passage from Chapter Four:

Macintosh had concentrated all his department's efforts on the Samaritan programme. The simplest and purest

form of the ethical situation, as he saw it, was the one in which two people were aboard a raft which would support only one of them, and he was trying to build a machine that would offer a coherent ethical behaviour pattern under these circumstances. It was not easy. His first attempt, *Samaritan I*, had pushed itself overboard with great alacrity, but it had gone overboard to save anything which happened to be next to it on the raft, from seven stone of lima beans to twelve stone of wet seaweed. After many weeks of stubborn argument, Macintosh had conceded that the lack of discrimination in this response was unsatisfactory . . .

John Jakes' *The Planet Wizard* is right back in the Ace bag, that uncanny bent for turgid heroic fiction combined with echoes of a super-science and undertones of magic. Nothing differs: give me a sword and a laser beam and I'll move the worlds.

In the two generations following galactic war, the planets return to barbarism. Anybody with the slightest



idea of how to run the old machines is feared. On *Pastora*, the Magus Blacklaw—no, honestly—the Magus Blacklaw stumbles across various bits of paraphernalia that convince the ruling body he is a king warlock. They send him to exorcise the demons of a neighbouring planet:

. . . First the demons of *Lightmark* must be exorcised.

While the *High Governors of Pastora* do not as yet know it, those they want for the task are three.

A girl called *Maya*.

A young fighting man of the house and lineage of *Dragonard*.

And, most of all, a wandering charlatan named *Magus Blacklaw*.

This is their adventure, at the beginning of the first age of the star kings of II Galaxy.

And so on. The demons are revealed to be mutants, somebody manages to turn on all the machines again, and the whole thing trudges to its foregone conclusion. Even the heroes of this kind of fiction must be bored by now. The only piece of originality Jakes has come up with to justify his tired old landscape is his placing of the II before the Galaxy instead of after it.

Despite its vestigial Gothic traits, M. P. Shiel's *The Purple Cloud* (Panther, 6s.) portrays a far more "modern" future than any of the above books. Although written before 1900 it foreshadows the twentieth century preoccupation with an impersonal apocalypse: it is one of the first disaster stories.

A fast-moving cloud of cyanogen, smelling deceptively of peach-blossom, blots out life on earth. Jeffson, the sole survivor, roams insanely about in its wake, burning and destroying on a grand scale, then settles down to build an immense jet-and-gold folly, a grotesque temple. His psycho-neurotic fixations and guilt-ridden opium visions are reminiscent of Huysmans' decadent grandeurs. The lake at the top of the world—"... in its middle is a pillar of ice, low and thick... a name inscribed round it... and under the name a lengthy date..."; Jeffson's destruction of London; and the temple, with its jewelled pillars and lake of wine: these images are as powerful as anything being done today in the field, with an added quality of freshness and naivete.

Finally, *Bug Jack Barron* (Walker, \$5.95 and Avon, 95 cents), which ran most successfully as a NEW WORLDS serial. This is the novel of which Donald Wollheim said:

There isn't a nice thing I can say about this depraved, cynical, utterly repulsive and thoroughly degenerate parody of what was once a real SF theme...

Donald A. Wollheim is the editor of Ace Books.

Charles Platt: *The Sexual Gothic Private Eye Caper **

PHILIP JOSE FARMER is well known in the science fiction field for his meticulous studies of man biologically involved with alien life

forms. He is now extending his interests to a category best described as sexual gothic. *The Image of the Beast* (Essex House, U.S.A., one dollar 95 cents) is the first in a series of explorations of sex, myth, mutation and the supernatural which, whatever the value of the writing and content, is certainly unique.



The opening is dramatic. The run-of-the-mill Los Angeles private-eye hero watches a film of his partner who, drugged in a state of hedonistic euphoria, has his penis first sucked and then half amputated by a woman with steel false teeth. His genitals are then fully devoured by a comic character camping it up in vampire fancy dress.

Unfortunately, it then takes the hero half of the novel to track down the sexual criminals who made the film and sent it anonymously to the police. He battles through ominous Los Angeles smog (reminiscent of threatening Gothic storm clouds), he has an unhappy and unfulfilled tryst with his ex-wife (the most human and convincing character in the book), and tries to get sense out of an eccentric collector of macabre and science fiction (whose exotic personality will be familiar to devotees of Famous Monsters magazine).

After this frankly dull first half, the action moves to within the secret passages and chambers of a traditionally labyrinthine gothic mansion. The form is familiar, as the clumsy hero is captured, tortured and then clumsily allowed to escape again, after a long (and competently exciting) chase sequence. What lifts the events above the entertainment level are the exotic creatures inhabiting the mansion: The ghost who the hero brings to life by

making love to her; the woman who masturbates a man-headed snake which lives coiled in her womb; the werewolves, and the fat lady, who gives the hero an anal pessary which inconveniently imposes an orgasm on him every five minutes while he is trying to escape. (At one point, an attacking werewolf slips at the last moment on one of the many gobs of semen). There is much more. Farmer's quasi-human biological forms, like the best circus freaks, are more than clumsy mutilations of normal human beings. They are members of a lost race: plausible, functional creatures.

In terms of trying to make these myth figures seem real, Farmer does his best attempting an impossible task. His witch belches when she swallows her potion; the vampire is a likeable gentleman, cultured, and a lover of the arts.

Moreover, the dull first half of the book, meticulously described and set in Farmer's own home town, seems an attempt to root the action in familiar reality. The effect is similar to that of the film *Rosemary's Baby*: a conflict between a setting of mundane sanity and a fantasy world of the supernatural. The combination is not, and cannot be, entirely successful, as if supernatural fiction demands a different, deeper suspension of disbelief than crime fiction. The creatures of the gothic mansion would seem ludicrous outside its walls.

Aside from the mythic creatures, the book's characters are not entirely successful. This seems partly a result of Farmer's dispassionate, clinical style. The scenes of sexual mutilation are, predictably, not sexually exciting to read; and yet they are not really revolting, either. Scenes of conventional sex are similarly cold, and Farmer describes a woman's vaginal lubrication almost like a doctor detailing a patient's symptoms for a television audience.

These faults would be serious if the book was merely a crime or social novel. But it is primarily an imaginative exploration of sexual deviation and, as such, the writing has the advantages of a documentary. Outré sex is made to seem functional and natural, and the fantasy creatures, even if never completely real, are convincingly vivid. The concerns of the book are with grotesque creatures and acts—a preoccupation with what-you-can-do-to-human beings which reminds one of nazi biological experiments. And yet the cool, clinical writing is never morbid, and never relishes the atrocities. The author shows the naive innocence of a scientist, and it is hard to see how the book could be classed pornographic (i.e., liable to deprave and corrupt) when it is not sensually stimulating.

The book has been strongly criticised for its weaknesses of characterisation, writing and structure. But this is missing the point. Such weaknesses would be ignored if it were set in a traditional gothic fantasy world, and in any case they are irrelevant to the essence of the book, which is its imagination. Farmer's vision and audacity is unique and exciting. He is probably the only writer exploring not the psychological aspects of the human condition, but its physical possibilities. It is refreshing to find such an individual viewpoint.

David Conway: The Quality of Justice

PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS PUZZLE in the way a child's questions do. A child asks the question "why is that a chair?" the philosopher asks "what is time?" or "how do I know I am not now dreaming that I am asking this question?" and whereas we feel confident in dismissing the child's questions as nonsense, the philosopher's questions are treated as somehow delving straight to the roots of the Tree of Knowledge and worthy of the greatest attention.

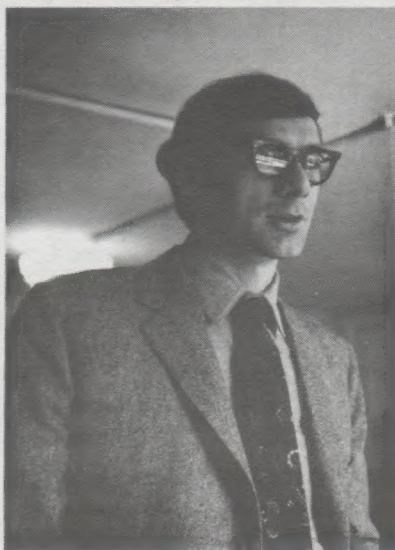
In his book *Punishment. The Supposed Justifications* (Hutchinson, 30s.), Ted Honderich considers the philosophical question "why do we punish offenders?". It takes some time for the strangeness of this question to sink through unless one is familiar with philosophy and then one is often immune to the sense of wonder which produces insight. However certain standard replies are quickly forthcoming. "It is right to punish offenders because offenders deserve punishment." "Why punish offenders? — because by punishing them we deter them and others from committing further offences."

These two views express two traditional justifications of punishment: the first based on a notion of desert and known as the retribution theory. The second, justifying punishment by its deterrent effects, is known as the deterrence theory. Both theories make a common assumption which some people may think could never be seriously questioned: the assumption that we are indeed justified in punishing offenders. This assumption has been questioned by a whole group of thinkers. Their view is that all those who commit offences do so as a result

of illness, personality disorders, and should not so much be punished as cured or treated. Honderich calls this view the reform theory.

Which of these competing theories is correct? Is any? Is there any compromise between them? Honderich has a lot to say about each of them—but finds little to say for any of them taken on their own. Each is open to insuperable objections. Very briefly (and at a likely cost of gross distortion) what Honderich finds wrong with each of them is as follows. The retribution theory according to Honderich, does not offer a morally tenable reason for punishment. The fact that someone has behaved culpably—that he has caused a certain harm by a responsible action—"taken by itself seems to have no moral consequences" (page 32).

The deterrence theory has the objectionable consequence that it justifies the punishment of an innocent man where the gain in deterrence of possible offenders by the imposition of the punishment is sufficient to outweigh the distress inflicted on the man. If the aim of punishment is solely to deter, then why worry



about *whom* one is punishing so long as the aim is achieved? Yet we share the conviction that only offenders should be punished not innocent people and so the deterrence theory can never offer an adequate justification of punishment, because it commits us to something we are against. Honderich makes the interesting suggestion that in choosing only offenders for punishment we are governed by a principle of equality. It is this principle, Honderich thinks, which the retributivists have grasped but only half articulated in their talk of desert. "Any acceptable justification (of punishment) must rest on its being *deserved* in a somewhat but not unreasonable use of the term where it

means no more than that the practice excludes grossly unequal treatment" (page 68).

So, taken alone neither appeals to retribution nor deterrence give a satisfactory justification for punishment. But then perhaps the practice is not justified after all and merely reflects a primitive and vestigial desire for revenge which the rational man should see for what it is and abandon. Certainly the reform theory finds most support from those with "the scientific attitude"; psychologists, sociologists and the like. It is true that with increasing scientific knowledge our attitude to the offender has altered; kleptomaniacs, who in the past would have been punished, are now seen as ill and treated instead. The suggestion is that all crimes should be seen as symptoms of illness.

This view is still on the level of a recommendation—as Honderich points out; it is simply nowhere established that all offenders are ill. There is however a very general theoretical consideration which, too, challenges the assumption that we are ever justified in punishing. One would not have to show that everyone who committed an offence was ill to get the desired conclusion. Instead, supposing it was shown that everything that everybody ever does had to happen. Then the murderer had to murder, the thief to steal. Normally when someone *has* to perform some action, we do not hold him responsible for it. For instance if I open my boss's safe because I have been threatened by a man with a gun and ordered to, I would not be held responsible for the robbery. I had no choice what to do. But supposing it was found that the man with the gun had no choice what to do—that as a result of defective heredity and unfortunate environment, for which he is not responsible, he has developed a warped personality which made him commit the crime; what if the criminal was as compelled by his past history as I was compelled by his gun? If the man could not have done otherwise than rob the bank, then he was as free as Punch and Judy jumping about as their strings are pulled; and surely he ought not to be punished for something he could not help doing. So the whole justification of punishment looks threatened if the truth of determinism, the belief that every event is completely determined by preceding causes, means we have no free will.

The question whether we can be said to possess free will if determinism is true has a long tradition of philosophical enquiry behind it, going back at least to Aristotle. The spirit of determinism which denies freedom of choice finds striking expression in a stanza of Omar Khayyam:

With earth's first day they did the
last man knead
And there of the last harvest sowed
the seed
And the first morning of creation
wrote
What the last dawn of reckoning
shall read

A long and respectable tradition of philosophers including Aristotle, Hume and Ayer have been reluctant to draw the conclusion that if determination is true, free will is an illusion. In fact many argue that freedom presupposes determinism. Very roughly their kind of argument goes: it is true that all events, and hence all actions and decisions to act are caused—but what we mean when we say an act is free is not that it was uncaused, but that the agent wanted to perform the action and that he was neither constrained nor compelled to perform it. Indeed, if free will requires that actions are not caused then we are not the causes of our actions and hence equally not responsible. This view is supported by an appeal to the way we do determine whether an act was free—we do not try to discover whether it was uncaused but whether the agent was uncompelled and unconstrained.

Honderich shows no mercy with this way of solving the problem. It is

true, he agrees, that a free action must be an unconstrained action, but it also must be an action which could have been otherwise had the agent so decided; and if determinism is true, the agent could not have decided otherwise. Consequently, he concludes "if determinism is true we are *not* free in such a way that we are responsible or can ever decide other than we do" (page 123).

This does not seem to me correct. If determinism is true then it is true now and is compatible with whatever is the case now. What we have now are workable criteria for distinguishing between free and compelled action. Consequently we are free in such a sense as we require for all practical purposes which include ascriptions of responsibility for purposes of punishment.

Honderich's own theory of punishment requires that punishment prevents offences at the minimum cost of distress—this would entail in general that only offenders be punished, since it is reasonable to believe that innocent people would suffer more than offenders from being punished. Also required is that the penalties should re-establish equality of satisfaction and distress.

In many ways, Honderich argues, these requirements for justified punishment are opposed to our

present penalty system where the large majority of criminals come from deprived classes or groups, and so punishment aggravates the inequality already present in our society. However, *without* punishment "a society like ours... would involve even greater inequality" (page 171).

Contemporary philosophy is often, to my mind, justly criticised for being inward looking and unrelated to practical issues. This book is both provocative and clearly argued and illustrates how philosophy can clarify our unquestioned assumptions in an area which should be of concern not merely to philosophers and to those involved in the legal profession.

Though dealing mainly with the justification of punishment, Honderich also looks at the more controversial question: how far the law should encroach on the activities of individuals in matters of personal, as opposed to social, welfare. This discussion involves a consideration of the highly topical questions whether drug taking and abortion should be considered offences.

This is not an easy book. Philosophy is not an easy subject. For those, however, who still possess a concern for the quality and justice of our social practices, the effort to understand this book will be more than rewarded. ■

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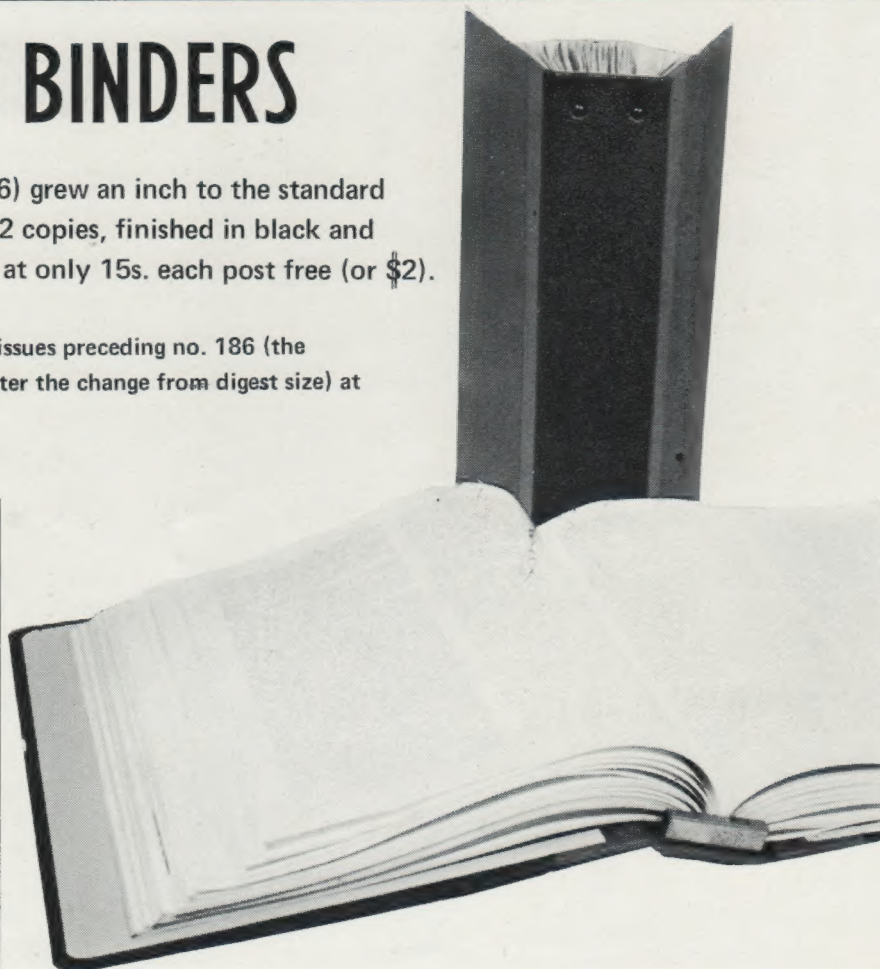
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